

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Narrative Aspects of Kenneth MacMillan's Ballet The Invitation**

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**Narrative Aspects of Kenneth MacMillan's Ballet *The Invitation***

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**BA Law, BA English and Literature, MA Ballet Studies**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of PhD**

**Department of Dance  
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To my father  
and to the memory of my mother,  
with love.



## ABSTRACT:

The British choreographer Kenneth MacMillan (1929-1992) has a prominent place in the narrative tradition of the Royal Ballet. As a major storyteller in the history of the company, his ballets with intense, dramatic stories are an important part of the dance heritage of British ballet. This thesis focuses on one of MacMillan's first narrative achievements, the one-act ballet *The Invitation* (1960), and studies the main thematic concerns and stylistic strategies that it deploys. The methodology that shapes the investigation is dance narratology, an underexplored discipline with roots in narratology and dance studies. The first extensive methodological approach proposed here blends the main tenets and principles of narrative theory (and transmedial narratology, in particular) with dance, multimedia and choreomusical analysis. The argumentation is thus structured around six central narrative categories (story, plot, narration, time, space and characters) and interwoven with analytical and theoretical practices from dance research. It also includes notions from other academic fields, such as discourse analysis, semantics, drama and film theory, and is illustrated with frequent dance examples. The discussion framed by those concepts exposes MacMillan's most significant narrative strategies in *The Invitation*, suggests the artistic influences behind them, highlights the role of choreography, music (by Mátyás Seiber) and design (by Nicholas Georgiadis) in the narrative, and proposes some narrative solutions to the main flaw in the ballet, the widely contested Carnival interlude. The thesis closes with a contextualization of the ballet, placing MacMillan's narrative choices in their most immediate artistic contexts, namely those of the Royal Ballet and British post-war drama.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *Kenneth MacMillan and Narrative*

In an extended interview which features in the most comprehensive documentary about his career to this date, the British choreographer Kenneth MacMillan (1929-1992) acknowledged that he was ‘naturally drawn’ to narrative ballets (in Bailey, 1990). The challenge of telling believable stories and delineating multi-faceted, integral characters to which the audience could relate was a chief motivation for his creativity. In his pursuit of dramatic stories and well-crafted characters, MacMillan opened up ballet repertory to themes previously considered unsuitable for the ballet stage, used ballet as a means to delineate the characters’ psychological motivations, and invested his fluid choreography with a powerful expressive quality. As a consequence of his interest in narrative dance, more than two-thirds of his repertory is composed of narrative ballets, a dance genre that he broadened and strengthened by eschewing its ubiquitous ‘fairy tale’ atmosphere (which he considerably disliked), and by reinvigorating this genre through the creation of innovative works that have earned their place in the history of ballet. His full-evening ballets *Romeo and Juliet* (1964), *Manon* (1974), and *Mayerling* (1978) are much-loved and respected pieces still regularly performed not only by the Royal Ballet, the company where he developed most of his career<sup>1</sup>, but also by ballet companies all over the world.

### *Focus of this Thesis*

This thesis explores that aspect of MacMillan’s choreography: storytelling. It addresses questions related to the craft of telling stories, such as the selection of the events in the story, their arrangement in a particular plot, the definition of the

temporal and spatial features of the storyworld, the delineation of characters, etc. Ultimately, it investigates how the components of the dance (set and costume design, music, choreography and dancers' performance) shape the constituents of the narrative (plot, characters, time, space, etc.). To illustrate the discussion, the examples come from just one narrative ballet, *The Invitation* (1960), which MacMillan created towards the beginning of his career. Through the dissection of the wide range of narrative choices and devices embedded in this ballet, the analysis proposed here examines how MacMillan shaped the story, which sources he used for inspiration, which role he assigned to the different stage elements, and which contextual factors might have influenced his selection of themes and approach to storytelling. In short, the driving purpose of this study is the investigation of *The Invitation* as a dance narrative.

### ***The Invitation***

*The Invitation* is a tragic ballet that follows the tradition of scenic verisimilitude inaugurated at the beginning of the twentieth century by choreographer Michel Fokine. At a time when plotless or abstract ballets were preferred (George Balanchine in America and Frederick Ashton in Great Britain were already established choreographers by the time MacMillan started his choreographic career in 1953), MacMillan decided that he wanted to be a 'Fokine type' of choreographer (quoted in Seymour, 1984: 104). Following the path of other choreographers who had also advocated for a similar choreographic approach, such as Léonide Massine, Antony Tudor or the founder of the Royal Ballet Ninette de Valois, he instilled intense theatrical expressivity in his ballet productions. *The Invitation* follows Fokine's ideas about dance, as summarized by dance scholar

Lynn Garafola (1998: 19-25): all the stage elements (choreography, music and design) are orientated to achieve dramatic expressivity; characters possess a subjectivity exposed to the audience and belong to a particular social milieu depicted in detail in the narrative (Edwardian upper class); and in performance, the dancers interpreting those roles need to have strong acting skills.

Along with those aspects, the story in this ballet is compelling. It narrates the sexual entanglement of two adolescents with two adults (a married couple), ending tragically with the rape of the young girl. The main subject matter of the ballet is sexuality, a theme whose exploration in dance history can also be traced back to the Ballet Russes. Although Fokine made incursions in the topic in *Cléopâtre* (1909), *Schéhérazaïde* (1910) and *Thamar* (1912), it was his successor in Diaghilev's company, Vaslav Nijinsky, who dispensed with the exoticism in those ballets and proposed a more direct and unsentimental presentation of the topic in *L'après midi d'un faune* (1912) and *Jeux* (1913) (Garafola, 1998: 308). More explicitly, *Les Biches* (1924), by his sister Bronislava Nijinska, addressed taboo themes such as voyeurism, female sexual power and sapphism (Garafola, 1998: 130). In the 1930s, de Valois, who had danced with the *Ballet Russes*, created *The Rake's Progress* (1935). Based on William Hogarth's paintings, this ballet had a rumbustious orgy scene. Closer chronologically to MacMillan, several choreographers presented different perspectives of sexuality in the decades preceding *The Invitation*. While Antony Tudor delved deeply into the psychological underpinnings of sexual identity in *Pillar of Fire* (1942) and Ashton reflected on sexual ambiguity in *Illuminations* (1950) as well as sexual satisfaction in *Tiresias* (1951), both Jerome Robbins and Roland Petit choreographed unambiguously erotic duets in, respectively, *The Cage* (1951) and *Carmen* (1949). None of these



antecedents contained, however, the main factor in MacMillan's narrative, violence. The brutal twist added by the British choreographer gives the topical choices in *The Invitation* a historical relevance that will be returned to in chapter eight.

To create the story featuring that disturbing rape, MacMillan drew on two female writers particularly concerned with the portrayal of the female experience of sexuality. The French writer Colette (1873-1954), also a dancer, an actress, a journalist and a public figure whose life choices and open bisexuality provoked scandal amongst her contemporaries, placed female sensitivity, sensuality and sexuality at the heart of her narratives. Her *Claudine* series (four novels published between 1900 and 1903) exposes female eroticism through the adventures of a heroine who defies repression and the rigidity of divine, social and moral constraints (Kristeva, 2004: 8). In *Cherie* (1920) and its sad sequel *La fin du Cherie* (1926), Colette portrays the unconventional love affair between a mature woman and a young man. MacMillan's ballet is based on a novella with a similar inter-generational affair, *Le blé en herbe* (1923). The Argentinian novelist Beatriz Guido (1924- 1988), the other fictional source for MacMillan's ballet, is a lesser known novelist that he discovered through the film versions of her books. Recurrent themes in her novels are the problems of adolescence, the drama of sex, the intricacies of family (particularly bourgeois), and the complexity of power and society, all in relation to her contemporary Argentina (Bellini, 1985: 560). *The House of the Angel* (1954) is her first novel. Like *Le blé*, it is a story of the sexual awakening of an adolescent by an adult partner, but the violent act that provokes the loss of her virginity is very far from the intimate (though bewildering) sensorial pleasures that dominate in Colette's prose. The main plot line and the

most important events in MacMillan's ballet, including the sexual abuse, come from this literary debut.

### ***Methodology: Dance Narratology***

The methodological tools that will lead here the enquiry on *The Invitation* belong to the academic discipline that is specifically concerned with 'the study of the logic, principles and practices of narrative representation', narratology (Meister, 2014). Dominated at its beginnings in the 1960s by structuralist approaches that attempted to identify and define narrative universals, contemporary narratology currently comprises a variety of theories, concepts and analytic procedures that no longer detach narrative texts from history, social context, and thematic concerns. To different degrees and with different purposes, contemporary narratology integrates form, content, and context in the study of narratives while still placing a strong emphasis on the analytical scrutiny of the text. The opening of the sphere of enquiry to questions beyond purely formal issues also coincides with an aperture in the modes of narration. Traditionally mainly concerned with narratives in written form (novels), narratology has progressively embraced other media and narrative genres, such as cinema, drama, painting or computer games, for instance. This thesis is framed within this transmedial narratology. Dance as a distinctive narrative genre still has an under-researched place in the constellation of media apt for storytelling. Yet the existence of a common set of narratological principles and concepts, together with dance theory and analysis, provide the solid theoretical and analytical foundation for the reflections on MacMillan's narrative ballet *The Invitation* presented by this study.

Narrative has also been studied by phenomenology. This discipline proposes an enquiry where the notions of intentionality and personal identity play a significant role. In *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur compares the intentional refiguration of time by narrative in contraposition with the order of action and the order of life (1988, 1990a, 1990b). Central to his study is the comparison between the historical and fictional accounts of time. He draws a contrast between phenomenological time and cosmological time, proposing the notion of 'narrative time' as the bridge between them (1990b: 244). In relation to personal identity, he articulates the concept of 'narrative identity', which can be applied to an individual or to a community (1990b: 247). He emphasizes the connection between narratives, be they historical or fictional, and personal identity. 'An examined life is in large part, one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives . . . conveyed by our culture' (1990b: 247). This phenomenological account of narrative embraces aspects that exceed the purpose of the research presented in this thesis. Here the attention will be placed on the fabric of storytelling and its constituents, as dissected by narratology, rather than on the construction of narrative as an intentional activity that helps delineate personal identity, as proposed by Ricoeur. Further details on the narratological tradition of investigating narratives are provided in chapter two.

### ***Existing Research on Kenneth MacMillan***

The narratological perspective that this thesis proposes will open a new angle for the academic scrutiny of Kenneth MacMillan's repertory. The regrettably scarce academic studies on MacMillan have previously investigated his career from other analytical perspectives, such as historiography, which has provided some of the

most rigorous studies on the choreographer. From that field, Alexandra Carter (2008) focuses on MacMillan's last work, *The Judas Tree* (1992), undertaking a historiographic analysis of its adverse critical reception. She highlights the fierce feminist aversion that MacMillan's work provoked in 1980s and 1990s, an aspect that might also have been behind the limited academic attention his works have received since then. Carter notices that the highly negative attitude towards MacMillan's approach to gender, fruit of the late twentieth-century critical climate, was applied retrospectively to Macmillan's entire career, reaching especially *The Invitation*, whose rape was paired with that in *The Judas Tree* (32).

Also from the academic discipline of historiography, Helena Hammond (2006) explores the links between MacMillan and the post-war British drama, suggesting that the Brechtian influence traceable in ballets such as *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1961) and *Isadora* (1981) is rooted in that connection. She argues that the arrival of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble at London in 1956 and the premiere of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* that same year left an imprint in MacMillan's working methods first visible in his choreography for the musical *The World of Paul Slickey* (1959), written and directed by Osborne.

With a similar line of enquiry (the exploration of possible alignments of MacMillan's ballets to general artistic trends) but with a contextualization that eludes a precise categorization in time and place, Ann Nugent (2002) examines the Expressionist influence in MacMillan. In her overview, she provides a general outline of his career from that perspective, analysing *Anastasia* (1967) and *Different Drummer* (1984) in greater detail.

Away from historiography, Geraldine Morris (2002) (2006) focuses on dancers' contribution, movement vocabulary and choreographic style in MacMillan's repertory. She dissects MacMillan's and Ashton's contrasting styles and pays particular attention to Lynn Seymour's participation in MacMillan's ballets, providing a sharp analysis of her solos in *Le Baiser de la Fée* (1960) and *The Invitation*. Other relevant analyses of particular works by MacMillan are provided by Carol Martin (2002), who concentrates on some of the most famous *pas de deux* in his repertory, commenting on the bedroom scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* (1965), *Manon* (1974) and *Mayerling* (1978), and by Jennifer Jackson (2002), a dancer in MacMillan's *Sea of Troubles* (1988), who studies that ballet from the double perspective of the creative process and its interpretation. Beyond choreography, a few scholars have examined the role of other stage elements in MacMillan's ballets. Sarah Woodcock (2002a) (2002b) investigates MacMillan's approach to design and Paul R. W. Jackson (2002) proposes some general conclusions on MacMillan's use of music.

Finally, though more journalistic than academic, the extensive biography by Jann Parry (2009) offers an excellent account of MacMillan's life and career. Since it is particularly rich in details about the circumstances surrounding the creation of his ballets and their public reception, it is an invaluable source for the contextualization of his work.

### **Why The Invitation**

There are several reasons why I have selected *The Invitation* as my case study. First and foremost, in this ballet, MacMillan was in charge of all the narrative choices since the beginning of the creative process, for he himself drafted the

scenario for the ballet. This involvement in the modelling of the story from the start means that not only did he create the choreography, shaping the way the story is conveyed to the audience from the stage, but also selected the events in the story and decided how to arrange them in a particular plot. The range of narrative decisions is thus wide and covers all aspects of the storytelling, making the ballet particularly fit for a narrative perspective. This is especially so because not all MacMillan's ballets follow this approach (the scenario for *Mayerling* was entrusted to his friend the writer Gillian Freeman, for instance). In addition, *The Invitation* is an almost original story. Although it is based in two novels and two films, the merging of the stories is entirely personal and since the literary and film sources are not well-known fictions, and are therefore not familiar to the audience, not many external references are necessary in order to understand the story. All the narrative information comes from the dance work. This aspect of *The Invitation*, which differs from the tendency of many ballets (both in dance history generally and in MacMillan's repertory in particular) to narrate a story already known to the audience, makes the ballet particularly ripe for the emphasis on the narrative power of dance that I intend in this thesis. Within the context of transmedial narratology where I locate my research, the value of *The Invitation* as a story new to the audience resides in its exclusive reliance on dance as a distinctive narrative medium with full potential for conveying a story.

The place that *The Invitation* occupies in MacMillan's repertory is another relevant factor for its selection for this thesis. Within a career which spans from 1953 to 1992, this ballet probably represents a turning point in his evolution as storyteller. He had made eight narrative ballets before (*Somnambulism* -1953-, *Laidrette* -1954-, *The House of Birds* -1955-, *Noctambules* -1956-, *Winter's Eve* -1957-, *Journey*

-1957- *The Burrow* -1958- and *Le Baiser de la Fée* -1960-) and all of them were short, one-act ballets. *The Invitation* still has that format but is considerably longer in length: almost an hour. More importantly, this ballet brings together thematic concerns and stylistic methods which MacMillan had previously tackled and employed to some extent but which crystalize here in a way that becomes a constant for the rest of his career. Thematically, *The Invitation* clearly consolidates the trend of ballets with unsettling topics that would later include ballets such as, for instance, *Anastasia* (1967 and 1971) (insanity), *Mayerling* (1978) (drug addiction and suicide) and *The Judas Tree* (1992) (gang rape and murder). Stylistically, among other accomplishments, the *pas de deux* becomes, in *The Invitation*, one of the main vehicles for revealing the characters' emotions and propelling the narrative of the ballet forwards. MacMillan would place a similar emphasis on the *pas de deux* in his subsequent ballets.

### ***Sources of Analysis***

My analysis of *The Invitation* is based on the examination of several sources. Chiefly among these are three audio-visual recordings of the ballet<sup>2</sup>. The main one is Edmée Wood's recording of a Royal Ballet dress rehearsal of the ballet in 1960. Unless otherwise indicated, the examples analysed in this study are taken from this source. The cast in the main roles is the same as the one that premiered the work at the Royal Opera House in London on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1960<sup>3</sup>. It features Lynn Seymour (the Girl), Christopher Gable (her Cousin), Anne Heaton (the Wife) and Desmond Doyle (the Husband). The scene of the rape from this recording is also included in the documentary on the life and work of Kenneth MacMillan *Out of Line* (1990), and is currently available on the internet<sup>4</sup>. Despite its priceless value for

capturing a performance by the dancers who created the roles, Wood's film has some shortcomings that should not be overlooked. The sound is merely the piano reduction of the score, not the full orchestra version, and the image is recorded in black and white, from a fixed camera that covers the whole stage but does not show minute details. Wood used to shoot additional material from a shorter distance to allow better appreciation of key passages of the ballets. She used to add those closer shots at the end of the recording, as an addendum. Unfortunately, this appendix, though announced at the end of the copy preserved at the British Film Institute, is missing in the case of this ballet. To compensate for these deficiencies, I complement the analysis of this recording with the examination of the following sources:

Still photographs from the press coverage of the performances document the set and costumes of the ballet at length. The vast majority comes from the premiere of the ballet, when the event attracted more attention and was reviewed in greater detail<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, most of these pictures are, again unfortunately, in black and white. Colour is, however, present in the reproductions included in the splendidly illustrated monograph on Nicholas Georgiadis by Evgenia Georgiadis (2004), in the designs and costumes preserved by the Theatre and Performance archive at the Victoria & Albert Museum (Georgiadis, 1960a to 1960g), and in some of the pictures of the extensive photographic report of the ballet by Keith Money (1967). The forty-three photographs of the latter, which were taken during a dress rehearsal and are displayed in the book as a sequential illustration of the story, also possess the additional value of showing angles of the stage obscured in the recording.



For the analysis of the music my main source is the BBC Radio 3 broadcast recording of the score in 1975. Performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra, it is conducted by Ashley Lawrence, who played the score live frequently when the ballet was toured by the Birmingham Royal Ballet (then the Touring Company<sup>6</sup>) in the sixties (Rigby: 1975). Additionally, I have also studied a previous broadcast recording from 1966 (BBC: 1966) and both the full orchestra and the piano reduction scores (Seiber: 1960a and Seiber: 1960b).

Various written materials are also helpful resources for my analysis. The original scenarios drafted by MacMillan for Seiber (in MacMillan et al.: 1960), with numerous handwritten suggestions and amendments, together with the programme notes of the first season at the Royal Opera House (in ROH: 1960) are useful sources to dissect the story and its elements. In addition, the description of the set, costumes, music, choreography and performance in the reviews of the period provides valuable details about the production. Furthermore, these written critiques usually include interpretations of the ballet and commentaries on the impact it made. Despite the fact that they are subjective accounts, they help to contextualize the work and to draw attention to key aspects of it.

The second recording I will use in my analysis moves away from the time of the premiere. It comes from a rehearsal of the ballet two decades later (on 12 September 1983) by Birmingham Royal Ballet at Sadler's Wells Theatre. It shows a few alterations in the choreography and, more importantly, offers the interpretation of the characters by a different set of dancers. The cast in the main roles is Nicola Katrak (the Girl), Michael O Hare (the Boy), Alain Dubreuil (the Husband) and June Highwood (the Wife). Although the recording is also in black

and white, to a piano accompaniment and with the dancers in practice clothes, it complements the Royal Ballet's original cast recording by providing information about how other performers have conveyed the same story.

The third recording in my list of audio-visual sources is the most complete in terms of camera angles, colour and sound. It captures a dress-rehearsal of the Royal Ballet on 6 of February 1996, the day before the opening night of the short revival staged that year. The film is in colour, with live music from the full orchestra, and with the simultaneous display of two kinds of shots on the screen, a panoramic one covering the whole stage and a medium-long one, framing the body of the dancer or dancers leading the action in each scene. The cast on the leading roles are Leanne Benjamin (Girl), Stuart Cassidy (Boy), Irek Mukhamedov (Husband) and Genesia Rosato (Wife). Lynn Seymour and Anya Linden assisted in the revival (Clarke, 1996: 577), the first staged by the Royal Ballet after MacMillan's death in 1992.

The television documentary *Dance Ballerina Dance*, presented and devised by Royal Ballet dancer Deborah Bull, completes the list of the available recordings of the ballet (in Marshall: 1998). It only contains an excerpt, the Boy and Wife *pas de deux*, performed by Bull and Adam Cooper, but it allows for the examination of a different interpretation of both roles. The source is particularly useful because of the time when it was recorded (1998), almost forty years after the premiere of the ballet. Bull's portrayal of the Wife is specially revealing about how a performer with a training and socio-cultural background distant from the time of the creation of the ballet conceives the character very differently from its original performer.

Finally, I complement my perception of the ballet with my experience of attending the recent performances by the Royal Ballet, in May and June this year. Two different casts allowed me a wider insight into the live enactment of the story. The first cast featured Francesca Hayward (the Girl), Vadim Muntagirov (the Boy), Zenaida Yanowsky (the Wife) and Gary Avis (the Husband). Dancers in the second cast were: Yasmine Naghdi (the Girl), David Donnelly (the Boy), Olivia Cowley (the Wife) and Thomas Whitehead (the Husband). I also observed the rehearsals in preparation of the revival, which was staged by Gary Harris from the notated Benesh score, with principal coaching by Jonathan Cope and Anya Sainsbury.

### ***Structure of This Thesis***

To reflect the steering role that narratology has in the methodology of my research, I have organized this thesis around central narrative concepts. Following chapter two, which introduces the foundations of the analytical model that support my reflections, chapter three includes a first approach to the story and plot of *The Invitation*. It studies the preparatory material of the ballet (its literary and film sources, and the scenario) as well as the score, the structure and the programme notes. Chapter six picks up on plot issues and combines them with aspects of the narration of the four relationships in the story, paying particular attention to the *pas de deux* of the ballet. Chapters four and five concentrate on the temporal and spatial dimensions of the narrative, covering both the time and space of the story and the narrative strategies related to the time and space of the narration. Chapter seven refers to the characters of the story. It examines the general traits of the figures and the particular features of the main characters, considering the techniques of characterization and the role of the successive performers in

achieving a distinctive interpretation of the roles. Chapter eight concludes the analysis of *The Invitation* by placing MacMillan's main narrative choices on the most immediate artistic context of the ballet, British post-war dance and drama. Chapter nine closes the thesis with the conclusions that summarize the main findings of my research and the paths for future development opened by my reflections.



## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY – DANCE NARRATOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

The analytical frame modelled here to lead the narrative investigation of Kenneth MacMillan's ballet *The Invitation* encompasses the two main disciplines involved in a narrative dance, dance and narrative. Both fields converge in dance narratology, the methodological core of which I source in a blend of narrative theory and dance analysis, with both components intended to be mutually supportive. To that basis, multimedia approaches and choreomusical analysis add an important contribution, complementing and deepening some aspects of dance analysis. This chapter fleshes out the details of this convergence, with special emphasis on narrative theory and its applicability to dance.

David Herman's wide definition of narrative, Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer's model of diegetic and mimetic narrativity for drama, and Monica Fludernik's stress on experientiality and characters are the central concepts supporting the narrative part of the methodology. The notions of story, plot and narration are also introduced here, since it is through them that the confluence between narrative theory and dance analysis is threaded. Dance analysis is proposed as the main tool to dissect the level of the narration, that is, the level related to how the story is conveyed in dance works (as opposed to other media). Marie-Laure Ryan's narrative across media project, also known as transmedia narratology, an important conceptualization of narrative in media other than novels, concludes the narrative section of this chapter, which finishes with a brief reference to the few antecedents investigating narrative in dance.

In the dance part of the chapter, Janet Adshead's model of dance analysis provides the general framework for the description and interpretation of the components of dance, in particular in relation to the most characteristic element of dance, movement. The combination of dance and music is the special focus of Stephanie Jordan's choreomusical methodology and the description of aesthetic hybrids of any kind (music, dance and design, for instance) is the target of both Nicholas Cook's metaphor model and Daniel Albright's analytical proposal. I will argue that these four approaches complement each other, with Jordan's, Cook's and Albright's proposals offering deeper insights to some aspects of Adshead's broader model.

## **2.2 Narrative Studies**

Narrative studies currently form a wide and thriving academic field. With roots in Plato's *The Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics*<sup>1</sup>, the concepts, definitions and methodologies developed in the area abound and many of them are the topic of intense scholarly debate. For this reason, the first task that I will endeavour here is to map the field, to include a brief history of the main developments of the discipline and to place this project within its narratological branch.

### **2.2.1 Brief History of the Study of Narrative**

Broadly speaking, there are two main lines of academic enquiry labelled 'narrative', both blossoming in the 1960s and currently with numerous branches. On one hand, from a sociolinguistic perspective, William Labov and Joshua Waletzky developed a model for the analysis of personal experience narratives told in face-to-face interaction. The analytical framework they developed defined narrative as a particular unit in discourse containing smaller units with particular syntactic and semantic properties (Alba-Juez, 2009: 160). Labov and Waletzky's

work established a key precedent for scholars of narrative working in fields such as psychology, education, social sciences, political thought and policy analysis, health research, law, theology and cognitive science (Herman, 2007b: 5).

On the other hand, from literary theory, Tzvetan Todorov coined the term 'narratology' to designate what he and other structuralist theorists of story (e.g. Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, and Algirdas Julien Greimas) conceived of as a science of narrative influenced by the work of the Russian Formalist literary theorists and modelled after Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics (Herman, 2007b: 5). The goal of narratology was to 'develop an explicit characterization of the model underlying people's intuitive knowledge about stories' (Herman, 2007b: 14). It did not seek to interpret specific narratives but to investigate their structures and devices, making explicit the system of figures and conventions that enabled them to have the forms and meanings they possessed (Culler, 1980: 8). Initially focused on novels, structuralists such as Barthes broadened the scope of their examination to include other types of discourses. Taking his cue from the work of Russian Formalists, who had investigated not only novels but also fairy tales, Barthes noted that stories could be presented in a variety of formats, media and genres and argued explicitly for a cross-disciplinary approach to the analysis of narrative (Herman, 2007b: 5). His call<sup>2</sup> helped to initiate the expansion of the field, uncoupling theories of narrative from theories of the novel and allowing the growth of narratives studies in areas such as drama, film, television, music, digital media, comics and graphic novels<sup>3</sup> (Herman, 2007b: 5). The current development of narrative theory has also overcome the exclusive focus on general structural universals that dominated the discipline until the early 1980s and presently aims to integrate form with thematic concerns, history and



social context. This wider approach, labelled 'postclassical' by David Herman (2007), builds on the classical tradition represented by the Russian Formalists and structuralist narratologists and supplements it with concepts and methods from a wide range of fields, such as gender theory, philosophical ethics, (socio)linguistics, cognitive science, media studies and critical theory (2007b: 12).

The research methodology I present in this chapter is embedded within this second line of narrative enquiry. Since the focus of this thesis is not on a narrative expressing a personal experience but rather on a fictional narrative, the kinship is closer to the tradition that has evolved from structuralist analysis than to the Labovian model. The concepts I will use, such as, for instance, story, plot or character belong to, or at least are characteristic of, the postclassical narratology that currently embraces a variety of fictional formats and that is referred to with both the scientific designation of French origin (term preferred in continental Europe) and the wider, descriptive term of 'narrative' (expression favoured by Anglo-American scholars).

### **2.2.2 A Definition of Narrative**

Before I introduce the specific conceptual tools that I borrow from narrative theory, there are two general questions that need to be addressed first. They both concern the issue of narrative in the context of dance. A definition of narrative that allows the consideration of dance as a viable narrative medium, and the clarification of the position of dance in the diegesis/mimesis debate about the modes of presentation of narratives, are pivotal pre-requisites for justifying the use of narrative concepts in the analysis of a particular ballet. By clarifying both intersected issues I intend to provide the two pillars supporting my methodology.

As is usually the case with concepts that inaugurate a research field, narrative is a widely contested notion. Definitions of narrative abound and most of them reflect the researchers' view on the scope of the academic field. As Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer succinctly express, Gérard Genette's narrow definition restricts narrative to a very specific way of representing events, always necessarily bound to verbal transmission of fictional stories<sup>4</sup> (2008: 344). Leaving no space for extra linguistic media such as dance, this type of conceptualization differs largely from the broad definitions placed at the other end of the spectrum. The attempts coming from transgeneric and transmedial narratologists who focus on storytelling regardless of the medium or mode in which it becomes manifest (Nünning and Sommer, 2008: 344) seem more appropriate for a research advocating the applicability of narrative tools to dance. David Herman provides a definition of this kind, descriptive (not prescriptive) and broad (not restricted to verbal instances). He also follows the prototypical approach to definitions promoted by cognitive scientists such as George Lakoff and Eleanor Rosch, who argue for open concepts where particular instances can be thought of as prototypical instances of the concept or less core examples (Herman, 2009: 14). In this line, Herman proposes that a prototypical narrative can be characterized as:

- (i) a representation that is situated in –must be interpreted in light of- a specific discourse context or occasion for telling.
- (ii) The representation, furthermore, cues interpreters to draw inferences about a structured time-course of particularized events.
- (iii) In turn, these events are such that they introduce some sort of disruption or disequilibrium into the storyworld involving human or human-like agents, whether that world is presented as actual or fictional, realistic or fantastic, remembered or dreamed, etc.
- (iv) The representation also conveys the *experience* of living through this storyworld-in-flux, highlighting the pressure of events on real or imagined consciousnesses affected by the occurrences at

issue. Thus –with one important proviso- it can be argued that narrative is centrally concerned with *qualia*, a term used by philosophers of mind to refer to the sense of ‘what it is like’ for someone or something to have a particular experience. The proviso is that recent research on narrative bears importantly on debates concerning the nature of consciousness itself.

(Herman, 2009: 14)

More specifically, the four essential features in the definition, which according to Herman will be fully actualized in prototypical examples but only partially fulfilled in less clear examples, refer to

(i) the particular discourse context in which the narrative unfolds, in light of which it must be interpreted (2009: 14).

(ii) a specific temporal sequence of events. Though the order in which events are exposed might vary, ‘narrative traces paths taken by particularized individuals faced with decision points at one or more temporal junctures in a storyworld<sup>5</sup>; those paths lead to consequences’ that differ from the hypothetical outcomes ‘of other possible paths that might have been pursued, but were not’ (Herman, 2007b: 10).

(iii) a sequence of events with some kind of disruption. To justify this feature, Herman builds on the work of Vladimir Propp, who characterized disruptive events as the motor of narrative, and Todorov, who argued that ‘narratives prototypically follow a trajectory leading from an initial state of equilibrium, through a phase of disequilibrium, to an endpoint at which the equilibrium is restored because of intermediary events’ (Herman, 2007b: 10).

(iv) a sequence of events encoding human experientiality. Borrowing from Monika Fludernik, Herman clarifies that narrative prototypically ‘roots itself in the lived, felt experience of human or human-like agents . . . [It] encodes the pressure of

events on an experiencing human or at least human-like consciousness' (Herman, 2007b: 11).

For the purpose of this dissertation, which is not to explore the distinctive features of the narrative that takes the form of dance<sup>6</sup> but rather to use narrative tools for the analysis of a particular narrative ballet, Herman's notion of narrative is borrowed to act as a framing concept. Fulfilling the four defining principles, *The Invitation* could be described as a prototypical case of narrative. It belongs to the tradition of British narrative ballet or, in wider terms, to that of Western theatrical narrative dance. It tells a story organized in a linear temporal order, with a beginning (the Boy and the Girl playing with their friends in the garden), a series of disruptive events (the arrival of the married couple, a dance lesson, a ball, etc.) and a tragic end (the rape). And it encodes the lived, felt experience of human agents (the Girl, the Boy, the Husband, the Wife, etc.). This last aspect is particularly and deliberately intense, as MacMillan admitted that his chief interest in creating the ballet was to move audiences through 'something they [could] recognise' (MacMillan quoted in Brinson, 1960a: 9).

Furthermore, Herman's definition is in agreement with the arguments I will make about the position of dance in the debate around the two modes of presenting stories (diegetic and mimetic) and their connection to narrative. Because of its emphasis on human experientiality, the concept is especially suitable for hosting the model of diegetic and mimetic narrativity that I will borrow from Nünning and Sommer to support the narrative nature of drama. For the same reason, it is in harmony with Fludernik's claim that the narrative essence of drama lies in the presence of characters onstage. These aspects are clarified in the following pages.

### 2.2.3 Diegesis and Mimesis

The modes of presentation of stories have been conventionally classified in two groups: diegetic and mimetic. In the former, stories are told, recounted by a narrator whereas in the latter stories are enacted, represented with no need of mediation through a narrator (Herman, 2007b: 276). This distinction, which goes back to Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics*, has traditionally generated the juxtaposition between narrative (here in the restricted sense of a story told by a narrator either in verbal or written form) and drama. With no overarching category that could bring them together in their common aspect of storytelling, diegesis and mimesis have remained for centuries two separate fields of enquiry. As a consequence, novels have been considered narratives whereas plays have not. In her seminal work 'Dance as an Art of Imitation', originally published in 1953, Selma Jeanne Cohen, rooting her argument in Aristotle, aligned dance with drama and the rest of the mimetic forms. She presented what she considered the milestones of storytelling through dance (Jean-Jacques Noverre, John Weaver, Michel Fokine and Martha Graham) as instances of mimetic art.

With the development of narratology in the 1950s and 1960s, the distinction was reinforced by restrictive models of narrative like Genette's and by the proliferation of methodological proposals that argued for the necessity of a narrator-narratee relationship as a prerequisite for the application of the concepts and tools developed by structuralist narratologists<sup>7</sup>. This tendency was enthusiastically followed by many scholars in film studies, where the existence of the narrator generated a wide debate and a good number of proposals<sup>8</sup>. Only in the past decades have narratologists started to point out the inadequacy of the distinction

drawn between narrative and drama, and have begun to make powerful arguments for drama as a narrative mode.

A first landmark in the realignment of drama and narrative was Manfred Pfister's *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (1988), originally published in German in 1977. It employed narratology's conceptual toolbox to describe plot structure and temporal rearrangements in plays. Additionally, it introduced the terms perspective and perspective structure into the analysis of drama, thereby suggesting that issues of point of view were relevant to both narrative and drama (Fludernik, 2008: 356). Not long after this publication, Mieke Bal advocated the inclusion of drama among narrative genres for the first time. In her *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985) she argued that a definition of narrative on the basis of plot inevitably required the inclusion of drama alongside film, ballet and other forms (Fludernik, 2008: 356).

A decisive further step was taken when the thorny question of the narrator in drama was addressed by Brian Richardson and Manfred Jahn. Building on the work of Seymour Chatman, a key scholar from the Anglo-American tradition of structuralist narratology, Jahn (2001) confirmed the narrative nature of drama on the basis of its tellability and experientiality, i.e. its capacity for having story and plot and for building a storyworld inhabited by characters, and claimed that all narrative genres, including drama, are structurally mediated by a first-degree narrative agency. He suggested that in a performance, that agency may either take the shape of a bodily present narrator figure or be a disembodied 'voice' in the printed text of the play or remain an anonymous and impersonal narrative function in charge of selection, arrangement and focalization (674); that is, a

function that makes decisions about 'what is to be told, how it is to be told... and what is to be left out' (670).

Richardson (2001), on the other hand, did not attempt to conceptualise the narrator in drama but opted for issuing a call for a re-examination of the mimetic and diegetic dichotomy. By offering several instances of narrators in plays, he argued that the boundary between the two was much more porous and unstable than was usually imagined (2001: 691). According to him, there can be several types of narration in drama, such as, for instance, a character telling a story to other characters or voicing his thoughts and experiences to the audience (i.e. in *The Tempest*, Prospero tells his daughter the story of how the two arrived on the island); a 'frame narrator' or speaker of the prologue who introduces the play that is about to be performed (*Romeo and Juliet*); or a 'generative narrator', i.e. a character who comes on stage and narrates events which are then enacted before the audience (the storyteller in Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*) (2007: 152). For Richardson, these and other instances demonstrate that a fundamentally mimetic art like drama might contain diegesis in internal narrations (2007: 151).

### ***Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity***

Among the latest developments concerning the narrative nature of drama, Ansgar Nünning, Roy Sommer and Monica Fludernik have provided valuable proposals for a reconceptualisation and reorientation of narrative theory. Taking their cue from Richardson, Nünning and Sommer (2008) contend that the distinction between diegesis and mimesis needs to be substituted by a model with two kinds of different narrativity, diegetic and mimetic. They define mimetic narrativity as 'the representation of a temporal and/or causal sequence of events' and diegetic

narrativity as 'the verbal, as opposed to visual or performative, transmission of narrative content' (2008: 338). Whereas mimetic narrativity tends to prevail in drama and diegetic narrativity typically dominates in novels, both types are possible in every instance of narrative (2008: 339).

To this model, Fludernik (2008) adds an important argument that reinforces the position of drama as a narrative genre. She clarifies where the narrativity of drama lies. Since according to the arguments expressed by Richardson, the presence or absence of a narrator cannot be taken as the key element to determine the narrative nature of drama, Fludernik proposes to look either at plot or at experientiality as viable indicators of the narrative nature of a particular form of storytelling, drama included. Though she concedes that Jahn's proposal relying on plot and on a 'composition device' regulating performance factors and anachronies, selection and juxtaposition of scenes could absorb drama as a narrative form, she prefers to place the emphasis elsewhere. For her, characters on stage are the minimal requirement of narrativity in drama. They guarantee consciousness and experientiality. That is, they are agents that perceive, think, feel and perform actions and they are perceived as being located in a specific space and time that resemble the human experience of space and time (360). According to Fludernik, these embodied consciousness and human figures are the indispensable constituents of narrativity (360).

At this point the reader might have already noticed the connection between the diegesis/mimetic dichotomy and the definitions of narrative presented earlier in this chapter. A narrow definition (narrative as the verbal transmission of a story) perpetuates the juxtaposition between diegesis and mimetic arts whereas a wide



and not medium-bound definition can accept the model of diegesis and mimetic narrativity instead. In addition, Fludernik's focus on experientiality is in tune with the definitions of narrative that include an element of human consciousness and/or experience as part of the key features of the concept. This is the case of the notion borrowed from Herman at the beginning of this chapter (2009: 14). Its fourth component refers to the necessary presence of a 'qualia' in the storyworld; that is, to the existence of 'a felt, subjective awareness of real or imagined consciousness undergoing the disruptive experience' which is narrated<sup>9</sup> (2007c: 280). In plays, characters on stage qualify for that 'qualia', allowing drama to be considered a narrative genre.

### ***Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity in Dance***

In line with these recent developments in narrative studies, I argue that it is time to reconsider the mimetic status of dance too, at least when it is regarded from the perspective of its power for storytelling. Though much research is still needed to elucidate the narrative peculiarities that differentiate dance from other narrative genres, the foregoing conclusions about drama as a narrative genre could help reach a provisional conclusion about the narrative peculiarities as these are manifest in dance, enabling this dissertation to present a narrative analysis of MacMillan's *The Invitation*.

Many of the examples of narration in drama that Richardson provides can also be found in dance, undermining its status as an art that is only mimetic. In Frederick Ashton's *A Wedding Bouquet* (1937), a narrator or chorus names the scenes, depicts actions and characters, and occasionally evaluates them (Morris, 2012: 83) as does an omniscient intrusive narrator in a novel. In MacMillan's *Isadora* (1981),

the leading role is split between a dancer and an actress on stage who narrates her story to the audience (Parry, 2009: 534). In Arthur Pita's *A Dream Within a Midsummer Night's Dream* (2014), the character of Puck becomes a generative narrator at the beginning of the ballet. Without the use of words but with gestures that evoke the act of telling<sup>10</sup> (that is as a mimetic narrator rather than a diegetic narrator<sup>11</sup>), he creates a story to be enacted by the rest of the characters. He remains outside the storyworld he generates, resembling a heterodiegetic narrator in a novel.

As these three instances of narrators in ballets demonstrate, Nünning and Sommer's model of diegetic and mimetic narrativity is more appropriate to account for the narrative possibilities in dance than the traditional diegetic/mimetic confrontation. By avoiding a categorical division that labels dance as exclusively mimetic, it allows a much more nuanced conclusion: dance is a narrative genre where mimetic narrativity usually dominates but where diegetic narrativity is also possible.

As in the case of drama, this conclusion can also be complemented by Fludernik's argument about where the essence of narrativity lies. Her claim that it resides in the presence of characters on stage, guaranteeing a consciousness located in time and space, can also be drawn upon to explain the narrative essence of dance. When dance is used to tell a story, it is the embodiment of characters, rather than the unusual presence of a narrator, that makes it recognizable as narrative. They inhabit a particular space and time and have human or human-like experiences during the sequence of events represented. In this sense, dance and mime scholar Edward Nye (2011) claims that 'character' was the driving principle of the

eighteenth-century *ballet d'action*, the most direct antecedent of the present narrative ballets.

Nye argues that the principles and practice of 'character', relatively new to stage dance at that moment, replaced oratorical principles (i.e. the physical delivery of a speech) in the performance of dance, making the *ballet d'action* a hybrid of dance and drama rather than of dance and oratory (115). 'Character', Nye explains, 'is the consistent and coherent psychological interpretation of a dramatic role throughout an entire narrative . . . it is a matter of "staying in character", and concerns expressive use of the whole body' (115). In eighteenth-century French performances, the principle of 'character' was a novelty in both dance and drama stages. It informed the new genre of the *ballet d'action* and displaced the concept of oratorical 'action' in drama, where the role of the expressive body relative to diction became more important (116).

This principle of 'character', shared by the *ballet d'action* and drama, resonates nowadays in Fludernik's main argument for drama and, through the element of 'qualia', in Herman's wide definition of narrative. By borrowing Fludernik's and Herman's notions and by linking them to the guiding principle that Nye reveals in or as far as the ancestor of narrative ballets is concerned, it might be argued that the narrativity of dance also resides in the presence of characters on stage. It is not the presence of a narrator or the development of a certain kind of plot but the portrayal of characters that best exemplifies the essence of dance as a narrative genre. The narrative analysis of *The Invitation* that I will attempt later in this thesis is rooted in this conclusion.

### ***'Being' Narrative vs. 'Possessing' Narrativity***

At this point, I must return to the definition of narrative presented earlier to make one further consideration about its applicability to dance. The special emphasis placed here on its fourth component does not exclude the necessary presence of the other three (pragmatic context, temporal chain of events and disruption or disequilibrium) in the configuration of the notion. That is, the 'qualia' guaranteed by characters<sup>12</sup> on stage are the most characteristic constituent of narrative dance but is not the only element to determine the narrative nature of a particular dance work. The delineation or the evocation of a character is not enough for a particular work to be considered a narrative. For instance, Leonid Yakobson's seven-minute solo *Vestris* (1969) delineates the most salient features of some characters (an old woman, a drunkard, a dying man, etc.) but these characters do not interact, inhabit a particular storyworld, produce any change of state or perceive any salient or lasting alteration in their circumstances. That is, no events happen or surround their existence. Similarly, Balanchine evokes traits of the human personality in his ballet *The Four Temperaments* (1946) but his allusion to melancholic, sanguinic, phlegmatic and choleric moods does not include any perceived event or disruption in a chain of events. In both cases, it could be argued that these ballets 'possess' certain narrativity (for their evocation of characters or characters' traits) but not that they 'are' narrative works (they do not fulfil all four features in Herman's definition). 'Possessing' narrativity is therefore not the same as 'being' narrative<sup>13</sup> (Ryan, 2004: 9).

### ***Diegesis, in a Different Sense***

After that technical clarification, I should go back to the term diegesis briefly for a last remark on its meaning before I progress from the two pillars of my methodology (Herman's definition and Nünning and Sommer's diegetic and mimetic narrativity) to the three main general notions that frame this narrative section (story, plot and narration). In addition to the sense explained in the previous paragraphs (diegesis opposed to mimesis), diegesis has also been used by narratologists to simply refer to 'the storyworld evoked by the narrative text and inhabited by the characters' (Herman, 2007c: 276). In this usage, the term has generated expressions and concepts that preserve in their root this meaning of diegesis as a synonym for storyworld. Thus, for instance, it is common to set up the diegetic elements of a narrative against the non-diegetic elements. In this sense, the music is usually a non-diegetic element in a ballet or a film, since the characters do not hear it in their storyworld, but it can become a diegetic element when a character plays an instrument for the rest to listen or to dance to (Jordan, 2000: 71).

The root diegesis also preserves this connotation in Genette's well-known distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators (the former are characters in the storyworld whereas the latter stand outside it) (Abbott, 2007: 42) and in, among others, the expression hypodiegetic narrative, coined by Mieke Bal. It refers to 'a story within a story' (Herman, 2007c: 278); that is, a story told or enacted within the storyworld for the characters, who are the narratees or the audience of that story.

After this clarification, I trust the reader to identify the correct usage of the term diegesis in each instance. The context will be helpful in this task. When it is used in the analysis of the elements and levels of the storyworld, it most frequently refers to the sense presented in this section. When it is inserted in more theoretical paragraphs and a contrast to mimesis can be inferred, it will be used in the first technical sense of the word.

#### **2.2.4 Story, Plot and Narration**

Now that I have introduced the basic tenets of narrative theory, have defined the concept of narrative, and have defended the status of dance as a narrative genre, it is time to depict in detail some of the narrative tools that will guide the narrative analysis of *The Invitation*. From the major narrative categories that I will use in this thesis (story, plot and narration; characters; time; and space) I only include three (story, plot and narration) in this umbrella methodological chapter. The rest will be presented later, in conjunction with the analysis, in Chapters four (time), five (space) and seven (characters).

The three concepts under this heading refer to an issue that has been considered by some as ‘the founding insight of the field of narratology’ (Abbott, 2007: 40). The distinction between story and its representation (that is, between story and how it is communicated) is regarded as fundamental in the analysis of any narrative. Story was first analytically separated from the manner of its rendering in the work of the Russian Formalists who, in the 1920s, introduced the distinction of *fabula* (story) and *sjuzhet* (its rendering) (Abbott, 2007: 41). The translation of their work into French coincided with the popularity of Saussure’s distinction in linguistics between the signified and the signifier during the 1950s. As a result of these two

influences, Tzvetan Todorov introduced both concepts into the structuralist narratology giving the Russian terms the French equivalents of *histoire* and *discours* (Abbott, 2007: 41). Seymour Chatman translated the concepts into English as *story* and *discourse* (Abbott, 2007: 41). Later, this basic distinction has generated notable controversy<sup>14</sup>, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon research, where different translations of the same French terms have obscured their technical precision. Genette, for instance, made the distinction between the notions *narration*, *récit* or *discours*, and *histoire* (1980: 27), which most frequently have been translated into English as *narration*, *discourse* or *plot*, and *story*.

Despite the disputes, the term *story* is generally understood as composed of action (an event or events) and characters, and always proceeding forward in time (Abbott, 2007: 41). Among the different usages of the word *narration*, it is generally agreed that a narrow sense reduces it to mean the production of narrative by a narrator or even more restrictively to the narrator's words in all direct discourse whereas a wide one defines it as a synonym of narrative discourse. Close to the Russian term *sjuzhet*, in this technical usage it refers to the way the story is conveyed (Abbott, 2007: 42).

In addition to this controversy between story and narration, the term plot has also generated intense debate. In his work on the anatomy of the finite number of plots that underlies the infinite variety of narrative, Vladimir Propp used it as synonym of 'the skeleton of a story' (Abbott: 2007, 43). Genette, on the other hand, preferred a sense close to the artful disclosure of story and studied the way plot serves a story by departing from the chronological order of its events and expanding on some events while rushing through others (Abbott, 2007: 43). In both cases, plot

points at the distribution of narrative parts and is distinguishable from the notion of narration as the manner in which those parts are delivered (Abbott, 2007: 44).

Within this theoretical background, the terms story, plot and narration are used in this thesis in the following sense:

Story: the chronological sequence of situations and events that can be reconstructed on the basis of cues provided in a narrative text (Herman, 2007c: 281).

Plot: the artful construction of the story; the combination and sequencing of events that makes a story a story and not just raw material, shaping it with a beginning, middle and end (Abbott, 2007: 43 after Aristotle, Brian Richardson and Paul Ricoeur).

Narration: The process by which a narrative is conveyed; depending on the semiotic medium used, this process can involve complex combinations of cues in different channels (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.) (Herman, 2007c: 279).

I will also use the expression 'discourse level' as opposed to 'story level', in correspondence to the difference between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*.

As major narrative categories, each of these terms (story, plot and narration) encompasses a wide range of subjects that require further clarification. The following paragraphs explain those relevant to this dissertation.

### ***Story and Plot***

When the story and the plot of a particular work are explored, the aspects that are most frequently highlighted are its beginning and ending, the structure of events in the plot, and the core and peripheral elements in it. Richardson stresses the



privileged position that beginnings and endings have in drama, where a compelling beginning is often a practical necessity to keep spectators in their seats, and a satisfactory ending can help avoiding boos after the performance as well as negative reviews (2007: 146). Beginnings can be abrupt, plunging the audience in the middle of the action, or quietly expositive, allowing a smooth transition into the storyworld. They can be deliberately deceptive, ambiguously disconcerting, or any other way the author chooses to welcome the audience. Similarly, there is an endless list of possible endings. They can be well-knotted, open, unexpected, sudden, etc. each producing a different effect in the audience (Richardson, 2007: 147).

Between the beginning and the ending some of the elements in the plot are relevant to the development of the story whereas others are merely peripheral. When the former are deleted, the story is no longer the same. When the latter are altered, the story is the same but is told in a different way (Herman, 2007b: 13). Boris Tomashevskii distinguished between 'bound' and 'free' motifs, providing the basis for Barthes's distinction between 'nuclei' and 'catalyzers', which Chatman renamed 'kernel' and 'satellites', and Abbott 'constituent' and 'supplementary' events (Abbott, 2007: 43).

The category of plot intersects with two other major narrative categories, time and characters. In relation to the former, decisions related to the duration and order of the events, for instance, possess chief relevance in the configuration of the plot, but they are absorbed by the notion 'discourse time', coined by Gerard Genette and introduced in this thesis later, in chapter four. Concerning the intersection between plot and characters, Manfred Pfister (1988) considers that, in drama (and

the argument applies to dance too), there is a constant structural interdependence of the two categories. In the same way that the concept of action implies the notion of an active subject and, conversely, the concept of character implies the notion of action, in drama the presentation of a character without even the most rudimentary plot and the presentation of a plot that does not contain even the most drastically reduced form of character is inconceivable (1988: 160). In this dissertation, this mutual interdependence determines that considerations on questions related to both categories will inevitably appear in the chapters devoted to each of them (chapter three –plot- and chapter seven –characters-).

### ***Narrative Gaps***

In close connection with issues concerning the story and its emplotment, there is another concept that helps to unravel some useful traits of the process of construction of the plot. The notion ‘narrative gap’, first developed by Wolfgang Iser and Meir Sternberg, refers to the inevitable omissions that allow the story to have dynamism and the storyworld to have some particular features and not others (Abbott, 2007: 44). These gaps can be detected both in what is told and in the process of telling. Omissions in the telling constitute ellipses whereas those in the told underscore the radical incompleteness of the fictional worlds (Herman, 2007c: 278), revealing how much of the inner and outer, actual and possible, material and immaterial world is comprised in the story (Abbott, 2007: 45). The features included in the plot shape the storyworld in a certain way which is unique to that storyworld and makes it different from any other configuration that could stem from a different set of characteristics. In the cases where a story travels from one medium to another or its plot undergoes a process of reshaping, the way the

narrative gaps are opened, filled in and closed in comparison to the original reveals the areas in which the peculiarity of each instance lies (Abbott, 2007: 50).

Narrative gaps are a useful tool in this dissertation, since the story of *The Invitation* is a blend of two different stories available to MacMillan in four different plots (two from the novels and two from the films which adapted them for the screen). The way MacMillan reconfigures the narrative gaps from those antecedents is a key indicative of his decisions as a storyteller.

### ***Narration***

Beyond story and plot, the term narration needs some clarification too. Referring to the 'discourse' level of narrative (*sjuzhet*), it generally tends to focus on issues closely related to the existence of a narrator, such as voice, focalization, feeling, judgement, mood, distance and tone (Abbott, 2007: 44). In narrative forms such as dance and drama, where mimetic narrativity dominates and therefore a narrator is very occasionally present, the concept of narration (as the process by which the story is narrated) absorbs the functions and features traditionally highlighted for the narrator. In addition, in narrative forms different from novels, this category also acquires a central role in highlighting the peculiarities of the specific medium as a narrative genre. As Fludernik claims for drama, the main questions regarding the narratological analysis of plays do not touch greatly on the character, event structures or on the temporal dimensions but touch instead on the 'discourse' level (2008: 361). The way the narrative is conveyed in a particular form, involving complex combinations of cues in different channels, reveals most of the main features that make each narrative genre distinct from the rest. In the case of dance, the narration involves several acoustic, visual, kinetic and gestural dimensions that

differ from the linguistic signs in novels, the aural elements in music or the mixture of linguistic, acoustic, visual and kinetic cues in cinema, for instance. In order to dissect these elements (and the category of narration that contains them), other methodological tools are necessary. Dance analysis, multimedia approaches and choreomusical analysis are the ones selected for this role in this thesis. Developed later in separate sections of this chapter, it is important to emphasize here that their connection to the narrative methodology comes through this term of narration.

### ***Narrative Translation***

From a different perspective, narration also helps to bring attention to another question relevant to this thesis. Since a particular story can be narrated in different ways and using different formats, it is possible to find several instances of the same story under different appearances. Examples abound in film adaptations of novels, dance versions of plays, poems becoming songs, etc. The methodological problem that this coexistence raises is how to account for the relationships among them. The solution proposed here (where a ballet stems from two novels and two films) follows a tendency in narrative studies and dance scholarship to use the concept of translation.

Proposed theoretically by Barthes (1977: 121), the application of translation theory in practical examples of ballet adaptations of literary sources is a trend that has been adopted in recent times by Marion Schmid in her analysis of Roland Pétit's translation of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (2013), and by Laura Colombo and Stefano Genetti in their edited collective monograph devoted to the intersections between literature and dance (2010). Similarly to the process

of translating words from one language into another, novels or plays can be translated into dance, transposing the semantic meaning of one semiotic system into the conventions of another. The result, as in good translations, is not 'a servile illustration of the literary piece, but an autonomous and complete form' (Colombo, 2010a: 6), a 'new form of creation'<sup>15</sup> (Schmid, 2013: 185).

The operation of translating can be depicted through several synonyms, such as transformation, transferal, transposition, conversion, metamorphosis (Colombo, 2010b), and the scope of the translation can vary. It can be selective or complete (Genetti, 2010: 12) so that the resulting product can be a synthesis, an amplification, a condensation, an hypertrophy, an extraction of quintessence, a resonance, etc. (Colombo, 2010b).

Issues of intertextuality intersect with this notion of translation (Colombo, 2010a: 9). The search for the traces of a plurality of texts in the text one analyses and the exploration of the dynamic dialogue established between them could be, actually, a viable approach to study *The Invitation*. Its story is the consequence of a selective translation from different sources and contains several allusions to previous dance works, inviting comparison. In this thesis, I will place more emphasis on the theory of translation than on the intertextual methodology, although both will be present in my argumentation. In consonance with the rest of the narrative methodology depicted in this chapter, which is intended to unravel MacMillan's active role in modelling a storyworld, the notion of translation helps to stress his active intervention in selecting his sources and translating them into his vocabulary. For this reason, the notion of translation informs my analysis from chapter three to chapter seven. In contrast, chapter eight, which puts MacMillan's main narrative

choices in context and contains references to previous dance works, is imbued with intertextual considerations that help to understand *The Invitation* from the perspective of the history of British ballet. Since the main theoretical background that I will follow in my intertextual interpretations comes from dance scholar Janet Adshead, whose model of dance analysis forms the core of the next section of this chapter (2.2 Dance Analysis), I defer the explanation of her intertextual theory to that moment.

### **2.2.5 Narrative across Media**

To conclude this narrative section of my methodology, I include a reference to Marie-Laure Ryan's full-scale transmedial or transgeneric narrative theory, which currently represents the most wide-ranging and comprehensive scholarly treatment of the topic of narrative across different media. Her semantic, cognitive<sup>16</sup> and pragmatic approach to narrative differs from the model presented in these pages but constitutes an invaluable foundational study that illuminates the key issues tackled by the discipline. Anchoring her project in Claude Bremond's 1964 affirmation that the same story can be presented through different media, Ryan focuses on the latter, that is, 'on the particular semiotic substance and technological mode of transmission of narrative' (2004: 1). Borrowing from Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan, she argues that media are not hollow conduits for the transmissions of messages but material supports of information whose materiality 'matters' for the type of meanings that can be encoded. The built-in properties of media 'open up possibilities and impose constraints which . . . shape the narration, the text, and even the story' (2004: 2).

With this media-conscious stance, Ryan defines narrative as a type of meaning, a cognitive construct or mental images built by the interpreter in response to the text (2004: 8). The characteristics that the representation in the text must bring to mind to qualify as narrative do not differ greatly, except for the last formal and pragmatic feature, from the elements in Herman's definition presented earlier in this chapter. For Ryan, a narrative text must create a world and populate it with characters and objects; the world must undergo changes of state; the text must allow the reconstruction of a network of goals, plans, causal relations and psychological motivations around the events narrated; and it must lead to closure and possess a meaningful message (2004: 8 and 2007: 29). The cognitive representation triggered by a text with these features is the narrative and its configuration in the mind combines different stimuli (words, images, melodies, etc). Narrative is thus the mental equivalent of a multimedia construct, although among those multiple elements, language is the privileged medium to articulate the narrative script (2004: 12). In Ryan's view, other media can also make unique contributions to the formation of narrative meaning but language is the unmarked, standard manifestation of narrativity, as it has the leading role in the formation of the mental constructs. Accordingly, her characterization of narrative modes pairs up features that privilege the linguistic manifestations as the more widely accepted narrative option. Her first pair of narrative modes, for instance, sets a contrast between diegetic and mimetic narratives, and accepts the narrativity of the mimetic forms as long as they could be retold in diegetic form. 'When we retell a play, we produce a standard diegetic narrative. The *possibility* [her emphasis] to retell as a story would then be the condition of narrativity' (2004: 14).

In her discussion of the nature of narrative and its special relation to language, Ryan also addresses the implication of the linguistic dominance for the study of other narrative media. Although she respects proposals that require a transferal of the parameters of verbal narration to other media (and therefore a communicative structure involving narrator, narratee, narrative message, sender and receiver is demanded as a pre-requisite for the study of nonverbal media), she prefers to avoid the imposition of the communicative model of verbal narration on nonverbal manifestations (2004: 15). This approach, which matches the model presented in this thesis, implies that narrative is a 'medium-independent' phenomenon where the essence of narrativity does not reside in the narrator/narratee structure of verbal narrations.

Similarly, in the relationships between the more developed models for the study of verbal narratives and the investigations on other narrative media, Ryan advocates for a respectful approach to the specificities of each media. She recommends avoiding three dangers when doing narrative media studies: the temptation to regard the idiosyncrasies of individual texts as features of the medium; the indiscriminating transfer of concepts designed for the study of narratives of a particular medium to narratives of another medium; and the reconstruction from scratch of the narratology toolbox for every medium (2004: 33). In her arguments against the latter practice, she considers that many of the concepts developed by structuralism (such as Propp's functions, for instance) are narrative universals that describe narrative on a semantic level and are therefore also apt for nonverbal narratives. In addition, different media often share common properties, incorporating similar tracks or semiotic systems, and consequently a metaphorical transfer of concepts from one medium to another can be very productive (2004:



34). Within these premises in mind, she offers a wide range of possibilities for the fruitful development of nonverbal narrative theory. Among her suggestions, I here endeavour to follow one set in particular: 'critique the narratological models developed for literature; assess the applicability of their categories for media other than written language; when necessary, adapt these tools or develop new ones' (2004: 35).

### ***Narrative Studies in Dance***

Within her narrative across media project, Marie-Laure Ryan has briefly touched upon narrative in dance. Her short incursion is not, however, entirely successful. Lacking an accurate understanding of the medium and its history, she maintains that the narrative possibilities of dance are very limited, since it always relies on either illustrating a well-known story reflected in the title or a summary provided in the programme (2014). She also reduces the medium to gestures and movements (2014), forgetting that most frequently the narration of the story is achieved through a combination of not only gestural and kinetic cues but also aural and visual. She acknowledges that dance can represent the evolution of interpersonal relations and can translate mental life into visible body language but asserts that due to its essentially mimetic nature, it has only partial possibilities of working with discourse time (2014). In her view, in dance, the narrated time is largely limited to the time of the narration and thus, ellipses, for instance, are not achievable except for breaks between episodes where dancers disappear from stage and later reappear (2014). As a whole, since Ryan concentrates more on the limitations of dance in comparison to other media rather than on its distinctive narrative potential, the value of her contribution is reduced to placing dance

among the variety of media able to narrate stories. At least she concedes that dance has a space in the developing agenda of the field of narrative across media that her pioneering research is currently leading.

With a less general and more reduced focus, dance scholar Astrid Bernkopf (2011) has studied the Romantic two-act *ballet fantastique* from the perspective of Vladimir Propp's functions. She concentrates on a particular genre (*ballet fantastique*) and a concrete period of dance history (1830-1860), and she studies ballet scenarios, not performances, therefore limiting her investigation to the story and plot levels of the narrative (5). Despite this precisely delimited scope, her proposal represents a truly narratological approach to dance since it borrows methodological tools from narratology and applies them to the field of dance.

From a very different perspective, dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster has also investigated the confluence of narrative and dance. Her monograph *Choreography and Narrative* (1996) is devoted to the birth of the *ballet d'action* in eighteenth-century France and describes how dance progressively developed the theatricality and vocabulary of movements and gestures adequate to tell a story. Her methodological approach is not, however, framed within the field of narratology but within the discipline of cultural history. Her conclusions are therefore interested in tracing the links between the narrativization of theatrical dance 'with the increasing assimilation of narrative into other cultural practices . . . and with the larger social and political movements of that period' (1996: xv). In addition, she expressly distances herself from the hermeneutic tradition of theoretical enquiry (to which narratology belongs) and locates her research 'in a position upstage', with the dancers and choreographers (1996: xv). Rather than

contemplating the performance and theorizing it 'afterwards and from the distance', she examines 'each moment's action onstage as the embodiment of representational strategies implemented by choreographers and dancers' (1996: xv). She embeds her research 'within the practical decisions that build up, through the active engagement of bodies, during the making of dance', both during the rehearsal of dance and in performance (1996: xv).

Despite her academic location in those grounds, Foster's examination is still highly relevant for studies like this, concerned with the narratological aspects of dance. In the course of her elucidation, she frequently exposes narrative devices used by dance to construct plot and characters, and to convey feelings, moods and ideas. Her 'interludes', inserted as pauses for her main argument, possess particular value in that regard. She defines them as 'short, whimsical meditations' (1996, xvii) about some of the narrative strategies that, having started their development at the emerging moment of the narrative ballet that Foster examines, have become very well-known narrative conventions in dance. Most of these interludes expose how the conjunction of movement, gesture, music and/or design can convey messages, abstract ideas and emotions. For instance, the action of 'throwing oneself in the arms of' another character is, for Foster, 'a single, static, vertical icon' conveying the idea of feelings being shared in search of empathy and comfort (1996: 183). This series of 'expressive gestures' (1996: 34) or 'danced-images' (1996: 141) that complement Foster's historical account fleshes out the narration level of the danced narratives and can therefore steer the narrative analysis of dance works of later periods, helping to detect the same and similar narrative strategies. In this thesis, Foster's interludes will play a similar role to Daniel Albright's figures of consonance and dissonance, later examined in this chapter.

For their emphasis on how the combination of the different elements of dance can achieve a particular expressive aim, they will be helpful, in the way detailed later, for the analysis of the most relevant narrative moments in *The Invitation*.

## **2.3 Dance Analysis**

As explained earlier, in dance, the narration of the story is rarely achieved by the presence of a narrator on stage or the use of a voice-over narrator. Most frequently, it is conveyed through a mixture of acoustic, visual, kinetic and gestural<sup>17</sup> cues included in the dance work. This peculiarity poses the methodological challenge of designing adequate analytical tools to dissect that combination of semiotic channels and explain how it achieves its narrative expressive aim. These additional methods help to flesh out the elements of the vehicle of the story, i.e., the ‘discourse’ level, the *sjuzhet* of the narrative. The ultimate aim of these analytical tools in the context of narrative studies is to reveal the specific way in which dance, as opposed to other media, succeeds in telling a story. I propose here three methodologies for that purpose: dance analysis, which provides the general framework; multimedia studies, which explore aesthetic hybrid genres, like dance; and choreomusical analysis, which focuses on the conjunction of aural and kinetic elements.

### ***Janet Adshead*<sup>18</sup>**

Within dance analysis, Janet Adshead’s model provides the skeleton and main concepts of this aspect of my methodology. According to her, a dance work has four components -movement, dancer, visual setting and aural elements-, which together establish the form or structure of the piece. Their analysis is articulated around

four notions: description of components, discerning of the form, interpretation and evaluation (1988: 1). Adshead's framework is intentionally very general, since its purpose is to provide an analytical template useful for any kind of dance, whether it is ritual, social, theatrical or any other type (1988: 1). Since the aim here is to analyse an instance of a Western theatrical dance with special emphasis on its narrative content, I have introduced some adjustments and developments to Adshead's proposal to suit that purpose. I outline them in the following paragraphs.

From the four components of a dance work, Adshead pays particular attention to the most characteristic element of dance, movement, and in direct relation to it, she also includes the dancers' contribution (1988: 30) and the notions of choreographic and performing style (1988: 74). These are the aspects of Adshead's model that are most useful here. I use them, however, with some valuable additions coming from other scholars.

Under the analysis of 'movement', Adshead considers that the three main concerns for a dance analyst are 'the range of action and gesture . . . [the] spatial and dynamic elements within a specific band and the progression of clusters of these elements through time' (1988: 29). The attention to the range of actions and gestures focuses on types of movement: i.e. gestures, bends, extensions, twists, turns, stepping, running, jumping, falling, but also held positions, momentary pauses, stillness, etc. (1988: 22). The spatial dimensions refer to elements such as the shape and size of the moving body, the pattern that it creates over the ground and/or through the air, the direction that it takes, etc. (1988:23). The dynamic

elements of movement include considerations of the degree of tension or force, rapidity or suddenness, duration and rhythm (1988: 23 and 118).

Adshead delineates the main tenets of a variety of methodologies that explore those kinetic issues. Among them, Rudolf Laban's categories of effort-shape theory (body attitude, effort, shape, spatial orientation, initiation of movement, sequence configuration, and phrasing) are especially emphasised (1988: 27). In this thesis, these aspects of movement analysis will be a key methodological tool for certain aspects of the narrative analysis, such as characterization and the use of space. In particular, a term that will be used with certain frequency is 'flow', understood as the way in which movements are linked, marking continuity and progression (or the lack of them). The main basic distinction will draw a contrast between 'rigid flow', with clear boundaries between movements, and 'fluid flow', with boundaries difficult to grasp. Laban's conceptualization of flow with two polar opposites, bound and free flow, is behind this understanding. For Laban, flow is one of the four motion factors (together with space, time and weight) which are the manifestation of 'effort', the inner impulse from which movement originates (Maletić, 2005). This mental or inner attitude of resisting or accepting the physical conditions influencing movement implies, in the case of flow, the mover's attitude of fighting against or contending with the flow of change into which the weight of the body evolves as it moves in space and time (Maletić, 2005). In this thesis, the notion of flow, as part of the movement analysis inspired by Adshead's model, will not stress that inner impulse, but will be used as a valuable tool to describe the observable features of dance.

In respect of choreographic style, performing style and dancer's contribution, Geraldine Morris has developed Adshead's seminal work by refining these categories, defining them in more precise terms. With the intention of allowing dance analysis to encompass more clearly both the choreographer's artistry and the dancer's role, she borrows several valuable notions from other scholars. From Bonnie Rowell she imports a broader notion of context that allows her to bring the choreographer's intention and the choreographic context to her methodological framework (2012: 16). From Sarah Whatley and Adina Armelagos and Mary Sirridge, she differentiates between two categories of style, that of the dancer and that of the choreographer (2013: 16). And influenced by Graham McFee, she defines the concept of choreographic style as the choreographer's personal choices and rejections among the set of conventions existing within an artistic tradition (2012: 14). These terms, together with the conclusions that Morris draws from their use in practice, in the analysis of six works from Ashton's repertory, will especially guide my arguments in two chapters, seven (characters) and eight (context). The concept of dancer's style is pertinent to emphasize the dancers' role both as inspiration and contributors to the work's style (2012, 3), aspects that are particularly emphasized in this thesis in the study of the techniques of characterization (chapter seven). From the perspective of context (in chapter eight), the notions of choreographic style and choreographic context will allow comparisons between MacMillan's choices and those of other choreographers and dramatists, helping thus to examine the place of *The Invitation* both in MacMillan's repertory and in the history of the Royal Ballet.

Returning to Adshead's model for dance analysis, and progressing from her considerations on the kinaesthetic, choreographic and performing aspects of the

dance work to her reflections on the relationships between the four components, her model also needs some adjustments in order to suit the purposes of this thesis more exactly. Her description of the visual setting and the aural elements is very general, since she provides some guidelines that do not go into much detail about their features and distinctive contribution to dance. She is more eloquent with the structural design of the dance, where she acknowledges that the possibilities for an analysis are immense. She provides some general guidelines that rightly draw attention to the existence of a wide range of relations among the components: at a point in time (which allows a 'frame by frame' analysis); through time; between a moment and the linear development of the dance (i.e. climaxes), etc. Although these broad categories and her general comments on the visual and aural elements of a dance are certainly enough to support dance analysis, they can be complemented with some additional methods that address these issues in more depth. In particular, Daniel Albright, Nicholas Cook and Stephanie Jordan tackle these two aspects of Adshead's model (audio-visual material and structural relations) from different perspectives that can be very useful here.

Albright studies the relationships among the arts, proposing some analytical procedures to elucidate the consequences of the convergence. Cook proposes a methodological framework for the examination of musical multimedia. And Jordan restricts the scope of her methodology to the relationships between music and dance, designing some tools for a choreomusical analysis. All three scholars stress the rich complexity of multimedia forms and argue in favour of specific analytical procedures to extract it. Their methods are explained in detail later in this chapter.



Another important aspect of Adshead's framework is her conception of interpretation as a stage of dance analysis (together with description, discerning of the form and evaluation). According to Adshead and Pauline Hodgins (who conceives and presents this section of the methodology in Adshead's monograph), the interpretation of a dance work can be guided by four general concepts: socio-cultural background, context, genre and style, and subject matter (1988: 60). Adshead has considerably expanded her considerations on these aspects through her investigations on intertextuality. In her first methodological approach to the notion (1999), she emphasizes the role of the reader in the construction of meaning through the practice of interpreting of texts<sup>19</sup>. Drawing from Michel Foucault's argument that discourse practices have an actively constructed nature and from Roland Barthes' claim that a text is open, permanently unstable, Adshead considers that the reader has an active role in unravelling the plurality of traces encoded in a text (1999: 8). Interpreting a text is an imaginative practice which engages with the invitation to interaction arising from the multiple threads in the open text (13). Yet it has certain limits. Adshead invokes Umberto Eco's notion of 'model reader' (that aware of the conventions operating in art) (14) and Marco de Marinis' call for 'rigorous' interpretations (15) in order to advocate for an interpretation based on textual analysis. This special focus on the text is not expected to reveal universal explanations but to be the basis of the construction of meaning (20). The inclusion of the concept of genre in her model of dance analysis (genre understood as the existing categories of art) is intended to anchor the stage of interpretation in these grounds (2008: 13).

Adshead has refined later some of these arguments, adding important nuances that allow her intertextual methodology to be a fluid, productive approach to the

interpretation of dance. In her extended example of an intertextual analysis (of Lloyd Newson's *Strange Fish* -1992-), Adshead argues that since different traces in texts can prompt different interpretations, constructed by different readers, differently located and drawing from different historical and cultural backgrounds (2007: 94), it is important that the choices of particular threads and of particular theories of interpretation are solidly informed. The rationale behind the choices made, that is, the justification of their validity and appropriateness, should rest upon a robust theoretical basis for both structural analysis and methodologies for interpretation (2007: 107). Her own personal choices for the intertextual analysis of *Strange Fish* demonstrate how different thematic approaches imply different structures, which in turn produce different semiotic constructs that lead to different traces of meaning (107). Since each of the selected threads is thoroughly explored and the analysis maintains a continuous reference to *Strange Fish* and the context or culture to which it refers, the diversity of approaches triggered by her intertextual analysis allows for a rich and text-anchored insight of the piece.

In this thesis, Adshead's considerations on intertextuality and interpretation play a significant role in the conception and construction of arguments. The narratology-rooted and dance-orientated methodology I am proposing here represents an option of interpretation of dance lead by the interest in the story narrated in *The Invitation* and its configuration. The blend of two disciplines (narrative and dance) intends to explore the ballet with a set of tools that cover both aspects of that enquiry, storytelling and dance. Earlier in this chapter I have highlighted how narrative theory and dance analysis intersect through the concept of narration, so that the latter is the adequate methodology to dissect the particular combination of dramatic elements that convey the story (i.e., the 'discourse' level of the narrative).

Looking at the connection between the two disciplines from the opposite angle, that is, not from the perspective of narrative but from the point of view of dance, narratology enters in the framework of dance analysis (as modelled by Adshead) through the phase of interpretation.

As she proposes, the interpretation is rooted in a textual analysis of the piece and is informed by clearly defined concepts that cover the four areas of interpretation that she suggests: socio-cultural background, context, genre and subject matter. The artistic background of London in the late 1950s (particularly in dance and drama) and the influence it might have had on MacMillan's narrative choices are explored in chapter eight. That chapter also contains most of the reflections on the place of *The Invitation* in the context of the Royal Ballet. The conventions belonging to the genre of narrative ballet and MacMillan's personal choices within them are scattered along the extended narrative analysis of the ballet in chapters three to seven, grouped together according to the aspect of the story they refer to. The last area advocated by Adshead, subject matter (here represented by the story of *The Invitation* and its treatment as a narrative, not as an abstract or evocative rendering), possesses a leading role in my interpretation. Not only does it determine the inclusion of narratological concepts as significant methodological tools but also guides the structure of the thesis around major narrative notions that refer to the components of the narrative (story, plot, time, space, narration and characters). Despite this significance, however, it must be noticed that the analytical procedure of dance analysis plays a similar fundamental role. Although its visibility is less overt, it firmly underpins my reflections. Since my arguments spring from and refer to a text whose form is dance (to use Adshead's terminology), the textual analysis that supports my conclusions is inevitably

shaped by notions and practices from dance analysis. Ultimately, the relevance of dance as an equal to narratology in my methodology determines that my interpretation is concerned not only with the levels of the story and the plot of the narrative but also, notably, with the level of narration.

## **2.4 Multimedia Studies**

As a complement to Adshead's model of dance analysis in the area of the components of dance and their combination in a particular work, the field of multimedia studies provides some valuable methodological inputs for this dissertation. With a focus on the interaction of different media in artistic practices involving elements with a different nature, multimedia theory offers some theoretical and analytical insights that can also be useful for dance. Nicholas Cook's metaphor model and Daniel Albright's figures of consonance and dissonance address important theoretical questions posed by these multimedia compounds, and advance some analytical frameworks and notions helpful for their examination.

### ***Nicholas Cook***

Nicholas Cook's model for musical multimedia (1999) lays its foundations on, among others, Sandra K. Marshall and Annabel J. Cohen's experiments into the perception of multimedia, and on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work on metaphors. The former noticed how when two media intersect some or all of the remaining attributes of the one become available as attributes of the other (69). Lakoff and Johnson's conceptualization of metaphors share a similar principle. The semantic domains of the two concepts involved in the metaphor (ex. love and

journey) share some characteristics that allow the partial confluence of the two domains. A new meaning arises from this conjunction, enabling the metaphor to be effective. For Cook, multimedia instances work in a similar manner. When two or more media intersect, a new emergent property arises from the conjunction, enabling the remaining differences of the two media to be transferable between them. The key insight of Cook's model is that the effect of the interaction among different media cannot be subsumed within a model based on the simple mixing or averaging of the properties of each individual medium but needs to be negotiated as an emergent property attributed in the light of the individual context (55). Terminologically, his model implies that the relationships among the concurrent media cannot be accounted for with a simplistic model of parallel or contrapuntal intersection or in hierarchical terms, but rather as an interaction where meaning emerges as a result not only from the properties of each media but also from the way in which they are manipulated within a specific context (104).

On these premises, Cook proposes three basic models of multimedia interaction: conformance, contest and complementation. Conformance appears when the intervening media are consistent with or directly correspond with each other (100). Contest refers to instances where the different media are vying for the same terrain, each attempting to impose its own characteristics (103). And complementation is a mid-point between the two extremes represented by conformance and contest; difference is recognized but conflict is avoided because each media is assigned a different role (103). Although these three categories are theoretically clearly separated, Cook concedes that in practice they are rarely so neatly demarcated. Conformance is a rare case (100) and complementation is 'constantly teetering on the verge of contest' (120). To allow his model to be

analytically productive Cook recommends a sensitive application of his categories, distinguishing between the different roles played by the different media and characterizing the emergent confluence according to the relative preponderance of conformance, complementation and contest (106).

### ***Daniel Albright***

Unlike Cook's tri-conceptual model, Daniel Albright puts forward a proposal with two terms, figures of consonance and figures of dissonance. His purpose does not differ from Cook's, since he intends to develop a method 'for describing the aesthetic hybrids that come into being through artistic collaborations among the arts' (2000: 32). Although his methodology is conceived for his exploration of Modernism, and music is the central art of his study, he encourages the use of his analytical procedures for the description of artistic collaborations of any age and of any kind (2000: 7). He conceives of these creative alliances as mixed-media 'chords' where each 'note' is played by a medium (music, dance and painting, for instance) and the resulting effect is one of either consonance or dissonance. He avoids a horizontal study of each 'note' (that is, an individual examination disconnected to whole) and prefers to read them vertically, as aesthetic units that produce a single combined effect rather than several independent timbres (2000: 5).

Albright's purpose with this vertical analysis is to elucidate whether the aesthetic 'chords' created by several media are instances of the unity among the arts or on the contrary are examples of the radical differences among them. For him, the artistic collaborations that work together to achieve a single expressive effect are 'figures of consonance', whereas the artistic alliances that expose that no

connection is possible are 'figures of dissonance'. In these, the relation is purely formal, completely asemantic, and can only be understood horizontally, as a set of isolated components (2000: 185). Normally, consonance has a potent effect, highlighting how the different media work in a mutually reinforcing way, as in Richard Wagner's music dramas, where music, text and stage action all come together to produce 'an oceanic experience' (2014: 210). Dissonance, on the contrary, exposes an incoherent clash which attacks, erodes and possibly destroys the effects of each medium to the disappointment, teasing or exhilaration of the spectator, as when Federico Fellini used Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* in *8½* (1963) 'to accompany feeble old folks stumbling around a spa' (2014: 211).

These two broad categories are, however, not rigid. They form a continuum where complete consonance is at one end (which Albright names 'concinuity' -2014: 211) and absolute dissonance ('abrasion' -2014: 211) is at the other end. Particular instances of artistic collaborations are placed at some point of the continuum between those two poles. Albright's model is thus supple, since it provides conceptual points of reference at the same time that invites the analyst to describe the unique idiosyncrasy of each multimedia 'chord' with the analytical and evaluative terms each requires.

### ***Narrative Units***

In the context of this thesis, Albright's homophonic chords, which read the multimedia collaboration vertically rather than horizontally and at a moment in time rather than across time, can help detect, depict and interpret the narrative content embedded in *The Invitation*. Understood as expressive narrative chords that unfold the events of the story, these chords are formed of a combination of

kinetic, gestural, aural and visual cues. In the course of my arguments, I will dissect them as instances that illustrate how the ballet achieves its expressive aim of narrating a story. For their resemblance to Albright's figures of consonance and dissonance and in accordance with one of the synonyms he uses ('aesthetic units'), I will call these vertical compounds 'narrative units'. I understand them as mixed-media moments that convey particular narrative information of the story. I therefore use the expression with semantic intentions rather than with structural purposes, although they inevitably recall the analysis 'at a moment in time' that Adshead lists in her inventory of possibilities for a structural analysis of dance (1988: 46) <sup>20</sup>. I move away from structure and focus on meaning, using the notion as a tool that helps to illustrate how the narrative information is encoded in the ballet. Similarly to Albright's figures of consonance and dissonance, my narrative units theoretically form a continuum, where clear meaning is at one end and ambiguity is at the other. When interpreting the semantic content of a particular narrative unit, the resulting conclusions will be placed at some point between those two extremes, since in particular instances complete clarity or absolute ambiguity of meaning are unattainable possibilities in the open, unstable texts postulated by the post-structuralist era. Since the meaning of each narrative unit depends on the activity of interpretation, it will inevitably suggest a certain connotation, closer to clarity or to ambiguity, but will not display any absolute value.

In addition to a strong inspiration from Albright, the concept 'narrative unit' that I am introducing in these paragraphs also connects with Susan Foster's 'interludes' and with Nicholas Cook's work on multimedia, both discussed earlier in this chapter. Foster's 'interludes' (or 'expressive gestures' -1996: 34-, 'dance-images' -



1996: 141- or 'symbols' -1996: 181-) refer to instances from eighteenth century *ballet d'action* where the combination of stage elements in dance works achieves a particular narrative purpose, whether the portrayal of a character or the narration of an event. In contrast to Albright's mixed-media figures, applicable to any type of artistic collaboration, Foster specifically refers to dance compounds, making her examples closer models to the narrative units presented here. In addition, Foster's interpretation of these dance instances focuses on the way in which they contribute to convey narrative information, matching the interpretative purpose that guides the configuration of the notion 'narrative unit'. As for Cook's inspiration, his proposal to analyse multimedia as metaphors is behind the semantic-orientated nature of the 'narrative units'. Cook provides a solid theoretical background for their interpretation 'vertically', not horizontally (in Albright's terminology). In accordance with Cook's metaphor model, the meaning that each 'narrative unit' contains arises not from the sum of the features of each of their elements in isolation but from their confluence in a particular context. The convergence of cues from different media in each unit allows for the transferal of attributes among them, enabling the unit to project a fused, rich and nuanced meaning that resembles that of a metaphor.

Finally, these 'narrative units' bear a certain resemblance to Gabriele Brandstetter's concepts of 'pathos formula' and 'topos formula'. These two notions, which are central to her methodological approach for reading dance, are based on Aby Warburg's theory of the 'pathos formula' (2015: 15). They are 'visual inscriptions of collective cultural memory . . . which are constantly transformed anew in the receptive traditions of art' (2015: 15). Their underlying principle is based on a theory of art that emphasizes the dynamics of expressive potential in

sculpture and painting (2015: 15). For Brandstetter, these formulas are analytical tools for unearthing the visual patterns that form the deep underlying structure that shapes the foundation of dance at the specific period of dance history that she investigates, the turn of the twentieth century (2015:13). The affinity between my narrative units and Brandstetter's iconographic concepts lies in two features. Both are interpretative constructs ('merely attempts at making [dance forms] understandable' –Brandstetter, 2015: 13) and both are concerned with the expressive potential of dance. The main differences, however, relate to their focus and scope. While Brandstetter is interested in the visual and kinetic aspects of dance (body images and figurations in space), the 'narrative units' also encompass the aural component of dance. And while Brandstetter aims at detecting the underlying patterns across a specific historical period and in connection with comparable phenomena in theatre and literature (2015: 13), my purpose here is limited to the interpretation of the narrative conveyed by dance. This orientation toward narrative expressivity is the most salient feature of the 'narrative units' in comparison with Brandstetter's historic, cultural and symbolic formulas.

## **2.5 Choreomusical Analysis**

Choreomusical analysis rounds off the methodology of this thesis. Less wide in scope than multimedia approaches but more far-reaching in depth, it concentrates on the relationship between the aural and kinetic components of dance. Within the general framework of Janet Adshead's model for dance analysis, which I am here using as the basis that supports the dance aspects of the methodology, choreomusical analysis represents the sharpest tool for the exploration of music

and its confluence with the rest of the elements of dance. My main source here is Stephanie Jordan's influential work *Moving Music* (2000), which provides descriptions of her analytical toolkit and a good number of examples of choreomusical analysis in works by George Balanchine, Frederick Ashton and Antony Tudor. Jordan (2007 and 2015) later refined this analytical framework, with new theoretical additions that I also incorporate here, since they deal with meaning in more detail.

Drawing from Daniel Albright and Nicholas Cook among others, Jordan sees the intersection between music and dance<sup>21</sup> as 'a composite form with a distinctive new identity' (2007: 8). Her aim is to flesh out this blend and explain where and how the two media meet (2007: 12). The theoretical framework that she proposes adapts the concept of 'mutual implication' from film theorist Claudia Gorbman and the term 'interdependence' from film theorist Kathryn Kalinak (2007: 8) and therefore defines the collaboration between dance and music as one of mutual implication and interdependence (2007: 7). This model allows Jordan to go beyond the simplistic model of parallelism and counterpoint between the two media, which she regretfully finds dominant in previous academic discourses, although she retains these two categories to analyse rhythm and formal organization through time (2007: 8).

Cognitive semantics, via the work in music by Lawrence Zbikowski, is an important last addition to Jordan's theorization about the blending of music and dance. Zbikowski's working method is based on the explanation of conceptual metaphors as cross-domain mappings formed of culturally-based image-schemata coming from each semantic domain. Due to an underlying 'invariance' principle, that

mapping preserves as much of the image-schemata structure of both the target and source domains as possible (in Jordan, 2015: 97). As proposed by rethorician Mark Turner and linguist Gilles Fauconnier, Zbikowski considers that the resulting domain in the metaphor forms a Conceptual Integration Network (CIN) that allows for a complex, interactive relationship between the source and target domains that can function in both directions (in Jordan, 2015: 97). That is, not only can new meaning arising from the blending benefit from inputs from the source domains but it is also able to project connotations back to them (in Jordan, 2015: 98). In the case of music and dance, Jordan argues that the CIN explains how the blended space in which we perceive the combination of music and dance either relatively congruent or relatively non-congruent can feed back and reinvigorate the perception of each media in isolation (2015: 99).

Based on these premises, the core of Jordan's methodological approach is composed of two sets of conceptual tools that dissect the two aspects of the choreomusical relationship: meaning and structure. In relation to meaning, Jordan highlights that the expressiveness of music can stem from such characteristics as dynamics, tempo and tonal tension, and, more often, from semiotic conventions and codes (2000: 66). In this sense, Jordan comments how, for instance, music has been seen to suggest space (up and down in terms of pitch, or near and far in terms of volume), the passing of time (at different rates or as time arrested) or physical gesture (as the dynamic character of a musical unit suggests the quality of an action) (2000: 68). Through established conventions, music can evoke contexts and situations outside itself. Certain instruments, for instance, can carry associations of particular contexts and countries (2000: 68). Jordan borrows a few examples from musicologist Stephen Davies: 'horns accompany the hunt...;

panpipes invoke rustic settings...; pipes and drums go with marches; bagpipes are bound to call Scotland to mind; organs now have religious connotations' (2000: 68). In music written especially for ballet, instruments and dynamics have been regularly used to signify gender: gentle dynamics and high-pitched instrumentation have been favoured for women whereas louder dynamics and lower registers for men (2000: 69). The solo violin has had a particularly important place in ballet instrumentation, since it has been considered especially emotionally expressive, close to the human voice in its ability to 'sing' (2000: 70). Within an individual work, the device of leitmotif can function as a signal for a person or situation presented earlier, a reminder of something or someone perhaps no longer present (2000: 68). Used in nineteenth-century ballet and carried over into some twentieth-century work, the *motto theme*, forerunner of the leitmotif of opera, is a musical theme associated with a character or a situation and brought back to remind the viewer, and perhaps a character on stage too, of this association (2000: 70).

As for the structural categories for relating music and dance, Jordan includes the well-known terms 'parallelism', counterpoint, and Denishawn's 'visualization', together with a good number of rhythmic categories that she groups together in three categories: duration and frequency, stress, and groupings of sounds or movements through time (2000: 78 and 2015: 111). She differentiates between 'visualization', which is the choreographer's musical technique 'of creating concurrence or imitation between music and dance', and 'parallelism', which is 'the resulting relationship within a ballet text' (2000: 74). It is possible to visualize many aspects of music: 'rhythm and form; dynamics; texture, instrumental layout...; pitch contour; staccato and legato articulation; timbre, using established

associations between... a particular sex and an instrument...; energy pattern, patterns of tension and relaxation' (2000: 74).

In this thesis, the choreomusical approach will certainly guide the gaze (and the ear) in the analysis of the contribution of the combination of aural and kinetic elements to the narrative but will not be taken to its fullest possibilities. A thorough choreomusical analysis represents an approach to interpreting dance which can absorb and frame other methodological considerations. That role is assigned here to dance narratology and choreomusical analysis will be therefore limited to the aspects most directly related to narrative. It will be used as a valuable analytical tool but will not lead the discussion. Musical rhythms will be the aspect of the choreomusical relationship which will be most affected by this analytical option. I will not go into a detailed study of rhythmic structure and categories, since it could lead to a too exhaustive musical analysis, away from my purposes.



## CHAPTER 3: SHAPING THE STORY AND THE PLOT

### 3.1 Introduction

The first chapter that I devote to the analysis of *The Invitation* addresses issues related to the general configuration of the narrative, focusing on how Kenneth MacMillan selected the characters that would populate his storyworld, decided the events in which these characters would participate, and arranged them into a particular sequential pattern. Or to put it in technical terms, this chapter focuses on two narrative aspects of the ballet, story and plot. As I explained in section 2.1.4 of chapter two (which functions as the theoretical background of this chapter), these two notions are defined in this thesis as follows:

Story: the chronological sequence of situations and events that can be reconstructed on the basis of cues provided in a narrative text (Herman, 2007c: 281).

Plot: the artful construction of the story; the combination and sequencing of events that makes a story a story and not just raw material, shaping it with a beginning, middle and end (Abbott, 2007: 43 after Aristotle, Brian Richardson and Paul Ricoeur).

The questions addressed here in relation to these two terms begin with a reference to the material that Kenneth MacMillan used as the primary sources for *The Invitation*. He extensively borrowed from four literary and film sources, shaping the story and plot of the ballet from numerous intersections among them. This chapter highlights the borrowings that belong to the spheres of the story and the plot, with references to the characters too, and uses the notion of translation,



presented earlier, as the additional theoretical guidance that supports the argumentation. The four sources also inspired many particular images and passages of the choreography but since these instances belong to the sphere of the narration rather than to the levels of the story and the plot, I will scatter their analysis across chapters four to seven, when I will flesh out the narrative strategies that they illustrate.

After the exploration of the origins of the story and plot of *The Invitation*, I will then progress to explore how the main narrative skeleton of the ballet is reflected in the scenario and the structure of the ballet. I will then also provide an overview of the score, highlighting its general contribution to the configuration of the story. After the reflections on the music, my focus will shift to the little information contained in the programme notes and the title. In particular, I will examine the clues about the story that both of them provide to the spectator in advance of the performance.

Although the content of this chapter tightly focuses on the story and the plot of *The Invitation*, it only represents a first general approach to the ballet with these two notions. Further considerations on plot will be presented later in chapter six, and since it is inevitable that questions related to the plot of the ballet intersect with issues addressed by other narrative categories like time and characters, the reader will also find reflections related to plot in chapters four and seven. In relation to all of them, this chapter functions as the main point of reference for an initial, broad overview of the topic.

### 3.2 Literary and Film Sources

Kenneth MacMillan drafted the scenario for *The Invitation* from two different novels, *Le blé en herbe*<sup>1</sup> (1923) by Colette and *The House of the Angel*<sup>2</sup> (1954) by Beatriz Guido (MacMillan quoted in Brinson, 1960: 9). Both were adapted for the cinema in the 1950s and it was the films that initially drew his attention to the stories. Claude Autant-Lara's *Le blé en herbe*<sup>3</sup> (1954) and Eduardo Torre Nilsson's *The House of the Angel*<sup>4</sup> (1957) caught MacMillan's imagination and sent him back to the originals (Parry, 2009: 224). For his version of the sexual awakening of two adolescents, he merged elements from all four sources. In general terms, the main plot structure, the key events in the plot and two of the main characters (the Girl and the Husband) come from Guido's novel whereas Colette contributes with the two other central characters (the Boy and the Wife) and with the secondary (but significantly parallel to the primary) storyline of the plot. Torre Nilsson's film is the source for some important additions in relation to the plot of the ballet, such as the linear arrangement, the key role of the ball in the plot and the participation of the Husband in the story. Autant-Lara's film has only a residual impact on the ballet, which affects the character of the Wife.

To help the reader follow my arguments on how heavily these four sources influenced MacMillan's configuration of the story and plot of *The Invitation*, I here provide a brief synopsis of the ballet and the correlation between the names of the characters in the ballet and those in the two novels:

Set in the Edwardian period, in an upper-class household, *The Invitation* tells the story of four central characters (the Girl, the Boy, the Husband and the Wife) and the four intersected relationships that develop among them. The Boy and the Girl

are childhood mates and adolescents verging on puberty and the Husband and the Wife form an unhappy marriage. During a ball at the Girl's house they respectively seduce the youngsters but while the Wife does so tenderly, the Husband violently rapes the Girl.

The connection between the four main roles in *The Invitation* and its literary antecedents is as follows: Colette's main characters are Phil, Vinca and Mme. Dalleray, transmuted respectively into the Boy, the Girl and the Wife in *The Invitation*. Guido's protagonists are Ana Castro and Pablo Aguirre, closely corresponding to the Girl and the Husband in *The Invitation*.

### ***Le blé en herbe* (1923) by Colette**

The most poetic and sensual aspects of *The Invitation* come from Colette's novella. *Le blé en herbe* provides the ballet with two main characters (the Boy and the Wife) and with many details for two of the relationships in which these two characters participate, the Boy/Wife's and the Boy/Girl's. Additionally, it inspires some aspects of the tone and depth of the story.

In *Le blé*, the close relationship between childhood friends Philippe and Vinca is disturbed by Mme Dalleray, a married woman twenty years their senior who initiates Phil in the pleasures of physical love. A 'passage' en route to the sexual encounter between the young couple, Phil's seduction by the elder woman is depicted by Colette from the perspective of the psychological impact it produces rather than from the merely physical discovery it triggers. Though the awakening of the senses to new sensations is very present in Colette's sensual style, the affair is not romantically represented and puberty is portrayed as a difficult and turbulent process of change from the innocence of childhood to the complexity of

adulthood (Stimpson, 1980 b: 158). The set of conflicting feelings it entails is explored by Colette with affectionate detail. Both Phil and Vinca experience an emotional transformation, though each one undergoes this change in a different way (Stimpson, 1980 b: 159). Vinca is more perceptive, Phil more bewildered. In both cases, it is Mme Dalleray's intervention that provokes change.

A similar role as the catalyst of events is played by the Wife in MacMillan's ballet. The scope of her interference is, however, more restricted, since it only affects the Boy whom she seduces. Unlike Mme. Dalleray's direct impact on both adolescents, the chain of emotions that the Wife awakes in the Boy never reaches the Girl, since MacMillan opts to draw from a different source to build her story of maturation (Guido's novel). The introduction of another disruptive character from this second source, the Husband, transforms Colette's trio into a quartet, and prevents any influence of the Wife outside of her interaction with the Boy.

A second character from *Le blé* has a decisive presence in the story of *The Invitation*. The character of Phil is the strongest influence in the delineation of the character of the Boy in MacMillan's ballet. Although the Boy does not possess the leading role that Phil has in *Le blé*, he is still a central character in the ballet. His psychological features and behaviour are, to a grand extent, translated from Colette's novella. His closeness and tenderness to the Girl, and his naiveté and confusion about his first sexual experience are modelled after the adolescent protagonist of this literary source. And many events of his relationship with the Girl come from the playful games and confidences that Phil and Vinca share in *Le blé*. The first episodes of the novella, where Colette describes the tender childhood friendship that links the two characters and the incipient first love that is blooming

between them, is a strong inspiration for MacMillan's description of the relationship between the Girl and the Boy at the beginning of *The Invitation*. The two dance numbers devoted to the couple (Nos. 2 and 5) are imbued with actions and gestures that directly come from Colette's first pages. MacMillan includes in these descriptive passages incidents (such as the games or the Boy's gallant gesture with his hand, immediately rejected by the puzzled Girl) which do not advance the plot much but which are very revelatory of the nature of the two characters and of the bond that exists between them. In addition, at the level of the narration, much of the imagery and body language that Colette uses to narrate these events, giving evidence of the transformation of the child-like camaraderie into adolescent love, finds its way into MacMillan's translation of Colette's words into dance vocabulary<sup>5</sup>.

### ***The House of the Angel* (1954) by Beatriz Guido**

Beatriz Guido's *The House of the Angel* is also a novel of sexual initiation with a strong emphasis on the psychological process involved but its tone is, however, dark. Guido's female protagonist and first person narrator, Ana Castro, tells in analepsis<sup>6</sup> the story of her first sexual experience, a rape by a visitor to her father's house. A stigma that will haunt her for the rest of her life, the violent act is disclosed at the end of the novel, although it is foreshadowed from the very beginning. Numerous apocalyptic images of death and destruction abound in Ana's childhood memories, where sex is remembered as a taboo theme in her family. Colliding with her innocence as a child who is already verging on adolescence, the negative connotations of sex surrounding her existence create a mixture of curiosity and repulsion in Ana, ultimately propelling her to meet her tragic fate.

The core of the story and plot of *The Invitation* is built upon this literary source. The main plot line of the ballet, i.e., that which contains the main events and which supports the structure, is configured with events from Guido's novel. The story of Ana's rape under circumstances that should have led to her first consensual intimate contact with an older man is also the skeleton of *The Invitation*. The three key events in the Girl's trajectory come from *The House of the Angel*: in her family house, she meets an elder man, the Husband; she is seduced by him; he rapes her. The plot arranges this sequence as a linear pattern of events that progresses towards the tragic climax of the rape. As a result, the rape emerges as the leading event in the plot of the ballet, steering the narrative around it.

In addition to this key import for the plot, MacMillan also borrows much of the naiveté and vulnerability of Guido's main character, Ana, for the protagonist of his ballet, the Girl. Meeting a similar fate, the Girl's characterization, background and experiences are crafted after Guido. Like Ana, the Girl belongs to an upper class family with strict moral codes<sup>7</sup> (MacMillan et al., 1960). Like her, she has two elder sisters, a governess and a mother, and within this close universe of feminine characters, her closest contact with a male character is with her cousin, the Boy. Although his characterization in the ballet owes most of its inspiration to Colette's Phil, the function that the Boy plays in the plot of the ballet mirrors the role of Ana's cousin Julián in Guido's story. He is bit older than her, lovingly participates in her childish games, and affectionately guides her timid advances towards romantic love. In addition, in the Girl's affections, he is the counterpart to the violent figure of the Husband, a copy of Ana's rapist Pablo Aguirre.

The similarities between the Husband and Aguirre expose the most direct inspiration for MacMillan's villain. Similarly cruel and a stranger to the Girl's household, the Husband takes advantage of the naïve attraction he awakens in the Girl, betraying the trust that his presence as a welcome guest is granted by his hosts. To this characterization stemming from Guido, MacMillan adds a feature from his own imagination. Unlike the lonely figure of Guido's Aguirre, MacMillan's Husband has a wife. Although the source of inspiration of this female character is Colette's Mme. Dalleray, it is Guido's novel that provides the attributes of the unhappy marriage that ties her to the Husband in the ballet. Ana's parents form a miserable couple governed by patriarchal values. He is authoritative and domineering; she is submissive and suffering. Her inability to stop the illicit duel (arranged by her husband) that brings Aguirre to her household and the distress that she suffers over her husband's overt infidelities are clear antecedents of the unhappy tenor of the married couple in *The Invitation*.

Beyond these borrowings for the main characters and for the main plotline of the ballet, *The House of the Angel* contains several episodes that MacMillan transfers to the story of *The Invitation*. The children's games with the statues in the garden and the ball in the evening, both important events in the novel, are two episodes with a significant relevance in the plot of the ballet too. In the literary source, the park by the house where Ana spends her summer vacations has a set of nude statues that the adults prudishly cover with drapes to prevent the children's admiration of the naked bodies. The nude statues and the puritanical drapes over them propitiate games and mockeries among the adolescent characters and these scornful incidents will have a strong effect in Ana's mind. She is forced by her elder cousins and friends to kiss one of the statues, an event that she remembers with terror and

associates with the tremor provoked by the contact of the cold surface. Looking retrospectively back to this event in her narration, Ana considers that the incident and the unsettling coldness in her body that it triggered was a premonition of the rape (Guido, 2008: 89). In the ballet, the sinister and symbolical quality of the cold kiss as a foreshadowing clue of the emotional barrenness caused later by the rape is much weaker but the episode preserves its role to describe the strict attitude towards sex that governs the Girl's family.

By contrast, the ball in the evening has a more complex role in the ballet than in the novel. In the latter, the debutante ball of Ana's elder sisters provides the first opportunity for her first incursion into adulthood. When watching the dancing couples, Ana recalls that she sensed that it was the end of her childhood. The intimacy and the joy that she observed as they danced piqued her curiosity about the world of adults for the first time in her life (Guido, 2008: 106). In line with this association, the ball in *The Invitation* is also an event linked to adulthood, where the Girl realizes the extent of her attraction to the Husband. More importantly, though, the ball is in the ballet the event that fosters disruption. The extra-ordinary character that the duel has in the novel is transferred to this dancing event in the ballet. In Guido's account, the unusual event of the duel brings Aguirre to Ana's reduced world, providing the occasion for their violent encounter in her house. In the ballet, it is the festive occasion of this ball that plays the same role of creating a favourable atmosphere for disturbance, bringing the Husband to the Girl's household. As the frame for the incursion of Husband in the story, the ball works as a catalyst for the tragedy.



### ***The House of the Angel* (1957) by Eduardo Torre Nilsson**

The film version of *The House of the Angel*, directed by Eduardo Torre Nilsson, remains very close to the novel (since Beatriz Guido herself was part of the team adapting it for the screen and Torre Nilsson was her husband) but includes several changes that MacMillan transfers to the plot of *The Invitation*. The character of Pablo Aguirre is probably the one who benefits most from the screen version of Guido's story. In the novel, he is a vague figure whose traits are blurred and subjectively recalled through Ana's distressing memories. Though she provides some details about his life and personality, his background remains largely undefined. Importantly, Ana's infatuation with him does not seem to stem from his seductive nature but rather to be merely fuelled by her romantic imagination. By contrast, on the screen, he is a handsome elegant man with allure to cause fascination. He has a lover and is known for his philandering nature. In his public life, he is a successful politician and since his role as a Member of Parliament is expanded, his political reputation is more patent, allowing him to project a positive image that is almost absent in the novel. He is subtly presented as a two-faced man, though. Several characters reveal his hidden dark nature. His lover laments his infidelities; his brother reproaches him for his double moral values (his irreproachable façade in the public sphere contrasts with his libertine life style); and a political adversary provokes an aggressive reaction from him (a slap in the face), revealing his violent nature. All these features, latent in the novel but manifest in the film, are transferred to the Husband in *The Invitation*. The balletic equivalent of Pablo has an irreproachable public face, a good-looking appearance and a double nature initially only known by the person who is closest to him, his Wife.

Beyond the character of the Husband, the film *The House of the Angel* has a strong influence on the plot of *The Invitation* in terms of temporal arrangement. By transforming the fragmented, non-chronological recollection of memories of the novel into a linear account, the film condenses the most relevant episodes of Ana's story into a few days. It maintains the flashback, but presents a chain of events that progresses chronologically towards the climax of the rape. Significantly, the event that opens the sequence from the past is the game with the statues in the garden. Placed much later in the novel, in the film it is used as an introduction of both the adolescent nature of Ana and the rigid Catholic values of her upbringing. A similar starting point and linear development can be found in the plot of *The Invitation*.

The ball in Ana's house and the scene of the rape acquire, too, a key narrative presence in the film. During the former, Ana is no longer the intrigued passive witness of the novel but an active participant who timidly but happily dances in the arms of Pablo. This seduction, which MacMillan entirely borrows for his ballet, takes place in public and during a social event. It allows the first intimate contact between the protagonists, embodying the physical attraction that is nearly absent in the novel. Additionally, it propels the story towards the tragic second encounter of the couple and helps to highlight, by contrast, the final devastating effects of the relationship.

Equally relevant for the plot, the film version of the rape contains some graphic shots that make slightly more explicit the indirect account in the novel, where the narrator concentrates on her reactions ('I was paralyzed before him . . . I could not scream . . .' – Guido, 2008: 117) and on some external factors ('I heard the yellowish picture frames falling down . . .' - 117) rather than on the actions

inflicting harm on her body. Avoiding giving too many overt details, the film does provide some pictorial moments that partially fill that narrative gap and could have inspired MacMillan's decision to take the strategy further by filling the gap in its entirety for the ballet. Some of the images from the film account even find a place in MacMillan's explicit narration. For instance, Ana's clenched fists and folded arms creating a useless fleshy shield visually convey a sense of vulnerability that the Girl in *The Invitation* suggests with similar gestures in the intense final moments of the ballet. By contrast, the shots from behind the actor, showing Aguirre's neck, shoulders and fiercely embracing arms, form an impactful image of the violent force falling upon the defenceless Ana. MacMillan's Husband, dressed like Aguirre in dark trousers and white shirt, also uses his arms with ferocity to dominate the Girl, consummating his crime standing firmly at the front of the stage with his back to the audience. Closing the scene, this exposition of his vigorous back, parallel to the brief shot of Aguirre's back in the film, provides a powerful visual summary of the brutal action just narrated.

### ***Le blé en herbe* (1954) by Claude Autant-Lara**

The fourth source that MacMillan uses to model the storyworld of *The Invitation* has a tiny impact on the story and plot of the ballet in comparison with the rest of the antecedents. The small but intense imprint left by Claude Autant-Lara's film adaptation of Colette's novella mainly affects the character of Wife and mostly refers to the way the story is narrated rather than to the construction of the story and the plot. The film introduces several changes in the story of Vinca and Phil, since it adds some new episodes and characters, but none of them make their way to the ballet. In addition, it removes most of the halo of sensuality surrounding

Collete's writing although the character of Mme. Dalleray, which is slightly expanded probably to allow the stellar performance of the actress who plays the role, Edwige Feuillère, preserves and intensifies the features Collete assigns to her. Her thoughts, so perceptively recreated by Collette, are verbalized and, most importantly for the influence of the film in MacMillan, embodied with subtlety and precision by Feuillère.

The intimate dialogues between her and Phil and the loving caresses preceding and following their sexual encounters, here suggested also through ellipsis, mainly originate in the novella but acquire a powerful presence on screen. Feuillère's body language adds important nuances to the scenes. Her hands, arms, face and eyes reveal a vulnerable nature that is much lighter in the novella. Feuillère's Mme. Dalleray is an unhappy wife, emotionally damaged by the infidelities of her husband and drawn to the love affair with Phil not only in the search of pure physical pleasure but also in the quest for some affective comfort. And more importantly, not only is she in need of extracting physical and emotional satisfaction from Phil but is also generously ready to give affection in exchange. She is aware of Phil's adolescent naiveté and vulnerability, and she softens her manners with him as the relationship progresses. This element of reciprocity that slips into their affair, which otherwise is dominated by her from the beginning, together with her own fragile confidence, explains the touch of tenderness that permeates the sexual initiation that she leads. This feature, delineated by Collette and conveyed mainly through the physicality of the actress in the film, is translated into dance vocabulary by MacMillan for the ballet. The Boy/Wife relationship is the main recipient of this translation. Moreover, the characterization of the Wife and her behaviour with the Boy has a clear antecedent in Feuillère's interpretation of

Mme. Dalleray. This is especially evident in the performance by Anne Heaton, the dancer who played the Wife in the original cast and whose contribution to the role will be discussed later in chapter seven.

### **3.3 The Scenario**

MacMillan drafted the scenario for *The Invitation* from the four foregoing literary and film sources (Parry, 2009: 223). Two different versions of the scenario are preserved at the British Library, together with the manuscript of the score that the composer Mátyás Seiber wrote at MacMillan's commission. Apparently, both artists discussed the story at length since both versions contain numerous handwritten amendments and notes. The comparative study of both drafts shows that the configuration of the story evolved significantly during those initial stages of the creative process. The original scenario is a detailed script of the action, indicating the exact mood and atmosphere that MacMillan wanted for each of the scenes and the precise duration of each of the dance numbers. The major difference between the first draft and the second version shows that MacMillan did not intend to include the rape at first, although he probably changed his mind early in those initial stages. The type-written allusions to a love scene between the Husband and the Girl in the first draft are already amended by some hand-written notes that turn the love scene into a violent aggression. MacMillan's biographer Jann Parry speculates that the absence of violence in the first draft could have been a strategy to avoid de Valois's censoring intervention on the rape but no evidence of this has been found (2009: 225). Consequently, the reasons that led MacMillan to discard Guido's rape at first and to restore it later remain a mystery.

In the absence of the rape as the key event in the plot, the story shaped in the first draft placed much more emphasis on the unhappy marriage of the older couple. The ballet ended with the Husband and the Wife onstage, unhappy and apart, after the two adolescents, to whom they have respectively seduced, leave the stage together happily. The different endings in the two drafts demonstrate that MacMillan intended to tell a story of unhappiness in any case, although his decision to finally import the rape from Guido's novel shifted the emphasis from the older couple to the younger generation. The final version respects thus the spirit of the two novels from which the story stems from and transforms a merely unhappy ending into an impacting denouement.

The story reflected in the second draft of the scenario undergoes some minor adjustments before it reaches the stage. The programme notes of the opening night in London introduce two significant changes in the narrative, one related to the structure of the ballet, which shifts from three to five scenes, and the other relative to the filiation of the Boy, who now becomes the Girl's Cousin. This change in the name of the Boy has not, however, fully settled down in the literature related to the ballet, where the character is predominantly referred to as the Boy. Since this tendency is maintained in the synopsis provided in the programme notes, in many of the reviews of the premiere and in later sources documenting the ballet<sup>8</sup>, I will also keep the name of 'the Boy' in this thesis, although I will comment on the relevance of the family bond between the Girl and the Boy in chapter six.

### 3.4 Structure

As just mentioned, the structure that is reflected in the second version of the manuscript scenario organizes the ballet in one act, three scenes and nineteen dance numbers, as follows: Scene 1 (Garden): No. 1 to 5; Scene 2 (Inside the house): No. 6 to 11; Scene 3 (Outside the house): No. 12 to 19 (MacMillan et al., 1960). The number of acts has remained unchanged since its conception, although dancer Lynn Seymour, and dance critic and close friend of MacMillan's Clement Crisp, maintain that MacMillan intended two acts, with an interval in the middle (Parry, 2009: 227). Whether this was his initial idea, later discarded before drafting the scenario for Seiber, or a possibility that he pondered during rehearsals, or a post-production reflection, there is no documented evidence of it.

At some point before the premiere, however, the three scenes of the only act of the ballet were rearranged into five scenes, perhaps to allow changes of sets on stage between numbers. The nineteen dance numbers were also modified and reduced to sixteen. Some numbers were merged, significantly the last four, which become the long dance number sixteen. The five-scene structure is mentioned in the programme notes and in the reviews of the opening night, although none of the sources is clear as to when each scene begins and when it finishes. Both manuscript scores (full orchestra and piano reduction) contain sixteen clearly defined dance numbers. From the changes in the set that can be perceived in Edmée Wood's recording (1960) together with the titles of the dance numbers in the score and the scenario, and the allocation of dance numbers in the original three scenes, the structure of *The Invitation* can be reconstructed as follows:

**Scene 1: Garden with statues, turn of century, carnival time**

1. Mother and two Daughters
2. Girl and Boy
3. Group of Children
4. Adults

DROP CURTAIN

5. Pas de deux: Boy and Girl

**Scene 2: Inside the house**

6. Pas de deux: Married Couple
7. Dancing Lesson
8. Solo: Girl
9. General Scene. Adults
10. Pas de deux: Girl and Husband

DROP CURTAIN

**Scene 3: Outside the House**

11. Carnival Scene
12. Divertissement. Cockerels' Fight.
13. Boy's seduction by Wife
14. Carnival Guests<sup>9</sup>

**Scene 4: A Hidden Place in the Garden<sup>10</sup>**

15. Girl's rape by Husband

**Scene 5: Garden<sup>11</sup>**

16. Carnival Guests. Husband and Wife. Boy and Girl. Girl alone.

**Chart 1:** Structure of *The Invitation*

Transcriptions from the score and the scenario with kind permission of the Mátyás Seiber Trust



### 3.5 The Score

The score of *The Invitation*, commissioned by MacMillan from the England-based Hungarian composer Mátyás Seiber, whose music MacMillan had heard on the radio (Jackson, 2002: 65), was conceived as an important tool to delineate the story outline in the scenario. It reflects the structure in sixteen dance numbers, supporting the progression of events in the plot. The handwritten amendments on the detailed scenario that MacMillan wrote for Seiber suggest that the score was written with the idea of using the music to create atmosphere, to describe traits and feelings of the characters, and to reinforce or anticipate the action. As critic Noël Goodwin noticed, the music, which was tailor-made to meet MacMillan's precise specifications, 'reflects, underlines and sustains' the drama (in Barnes et al., 1961: 34).

In general terms, the score has a strong filmic flavour, with touches of jazz and ballroom music, probably as a result of Seiber's own musical inclinations. He had been a pupil of Kodály at Budapest Music Academy and after World War I settled in Germany as an orchestral player, conductor and teacher of composition and jazz (Griffiths, 2012). In 1935, he moved to England, where he became a teacher at Morley College and continued composing music in a great variety of styles (Griffiths, 2012). He had a 'versatile musical personality' that gave him the ability to write effectively in a wide range of music forms, including folklore, jazz and films (Goodwin in Barnes et al., 1961: 34). This experience in popular musical formats is reflected in *The Invitation*, which includes polkas, waltzes and jazz interludes, as discussed below.

Seiber completed the composition of MacMillan's ballet in the summer of 1960 and rehearsals started as soon as the piano score was finished. At the last stages of the creation of the choreography, MacMillan requested some additional music for some of the numbers but Seiber's unexpected death in a car accident in September prevented his involvement in these last amendments of the score (Parry, 2009: 227). Don Banks, a colleague and former student of Seiber, provided this new material. He used Seiber's existing music, both from the ballet and from some previous compositions of the composer like *Pastorale* and *Burlesque* for flute and strings, which Seiber himself had used for the entry of the children and their opening games (Parry, 2009: 227). The additions from Banks basically affect the Boy and Girl *pas de deux* in No. 5 and the last number, which is a recollection of earlier motifs in the ballet.

As in scores for films, the main function of the music of *The Invitation* is to support the action onstage, setting the atmosphere of the events being narrated. The most important devices that Seiber uses to achieve this effect are frequent changes in tempo, dynamics and harmony. The contrast between passages at a high volume and full orchestral force, and parts of slow and low volume notes reflect the changing tone of the action and create an overall atmosphere of mystery and impending tragedy. This alternation generates a pattern of tensions and relaxation that, however, never achieves an effect of rest. The passages of lower volume and speed always possess disquiet intent, conveying the sense of a hidden, potential disaster. This unsettling mood is especially evident at the end of the numbers, which rarely finish in the climax of an energetic explosion but rather in the disturbing calmness that usually follows the peaks of energy. In addition, the rise in dynamics is frequently accompanied by emphatic dissonances that reinforces

the atmosphere of catastrophe and prevent any triumphant impression from arising. The musical relaxation at the end of the numbers also helps the events in the story to unfold at an unhurried pace, avoiding abrupt interruptions or sudden changes.

In line with the tradition, outlined earlier, of using instruments to carry connotations in music written for dance, Seiber's instrumentation in *The Invitation* contributes to the ebb of dynamic and harmonic changes across the score by underlying the passages of more dramatic content with the force of the full orchestra and by imbuing some instruments with a strong descriptive power of both the development of the action and of the feelings and features of the characters. For instance, the sweet timbre of the flute accompanies the introduction of the Girl in the story, expressing her young and innocent nature. This instrument is later also associated with the Boy and their group of young friends, remaining closely related to the young characters of the story. By contrast, the low, deeper tones of the oboe are poignantly connected to the inner agony of the unhappy Wife. As an adult female character, she is aurally delineated in opposition to the youth and joy that the flute denotes for the Girl. The other main adult character, the ruthless Husband, is, in the music, linked to the authoritative potency of the horns, instruments typically associated with men in ballet. They lead the sinister melody attached to his presence on stage and, additionally, also send sober warnings on the coming action in several numbers of the ballet. The saxophone and the harp have a similar role in reinforcing or anticipating the action. The silky quality of the former is exploited to suggest sensuality and the soft strumming of the latter introduces a mysterious tone in the narration of the story.

The flute, the oboe and the horns play an important role in the web of themes and leitmotifs in the score. They respectively play the first and main manifestation of the three chief themes of the ballet. The flute leads the 'youthful melody'<sup>12</sup> that evokes the innocence of the young characters, primarily the Girl (see Musical Example 1 in Appendix 2). The oboe voices the innermost feelings of angst of the Wife in the 'sorrowful melody' (see Musical Example 2 in Appendix 2), and the horns expose the twisted nature of the Husband in the 'sinister melody' (see Musical Example 3 in Appendix 2). With no special links to any instrument, there are three other important themes. The 'strict upbringing melody' introduces the Mother in the ballet and is played by several instruments in different moments of the narration, reminding the audience about the strictness that dominates the Girl's and her Sisters' upbringing (see Musical Example 4 in Appendix 2). The tenderest moments in the story, shared by the Girl and the Boy, and the Boy and the Wife, are underlined by the 'romantic melody' (see Musical Example 5 in Appendix 2) and the misery of the married couple is stressed by the 'unhappy melody', introduced in their duet in No. 6 (see Musical Example 6 in Appendix 2).

The usual pattern of all these six themes in the score follows the convention of leitmotifs in opera and *motto themes* in nineteenth century ballets, mentioned earlier in chapter two. The theme is attached to a character (and a trait, a feeling or a situation he or she is in or is responsible for) in the first occurrence and sounds later in the same form or in a variation (usually, through the initial notes only), recalling the denotation initially suggested. This evocative power of earlier moments or situations is especially significant in the last dance number of the ballet. There, the narration of the story pulls all the narrative threads together, putting an end to the evolution of the four central characters in the story and

recollecting the main events of their narrative journey. The music brings back the memories of those events through these familiar leitmotifs, helping the closing number achieve the rounding-off effect.

A final general characteristic of Seiber's score is that it incorporates several musical forms, some of them from popular music and dance. The most conventional types are the *pastorale*, in the 'youthful melody' in dance number 2, and the *burlesque*, for the games of the children in No. 3. Seiber mentions both types of composition in the score and adapts their usual role in music to the narrative purposes of the ballet. The *burlesque*, developed in eighteenth century music in works in which comic and serious elements were contrasted (Rutherford-Johnson et al., 2013a), sounds during the games of the statues in *The Invitation*, matching the air of amusement and malice in the mockery of the Girl by her friends. The *pastorale*, popular in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to suggest rustic or bucolic subjects (Rutherford-Johnson et al., 2013b), is used by Seiber to depict the innocence of the young characters of the ballet. The *divertissement* for the troupe of acrobats in No. 12 is jazz-orientated, especially during the intervention of the hen in the cockerels' fight, which is underlined by a jazzy saxophone.

More significantly, four ballroom dances play an important role in the score. The polka and the galop are used in their social context during the dance lesson, while the role of the waltz and the tango is a bit more complex. When the waltz sounds for the first time it is also the context of the ball but the dancing of the Husband and the Girl to its notes has a strong suggestion of seduction. This denotative aspect is maintained in the rest of the appearances of the waltz, where, narratively,

there is no social dance event to justify its presence and the music is not therefore diegetic but non-diegetic. With this character, the waltz announces a seduction at the beginning of the Boy and Wife *pas de deux* (in No. 13) and during the initial stages of the scene of the rape of the Girl by the Husband (in No. 15). The tango has a similar function during the sexual encounter of the Boy and the Wife. Similarly non-diegetic, the sensuality attached to the dance form is exploited to create a sexually-charged atmosphere and to underline the Wife's initiative in the act.

To sum up, generally, the score contributes to the configuration of the story of *The Invitation* by reflecting some of the events and characters of the plot. Through sudden shifts in tempo, dynamics and harmony, it creates a mysterious, disturbing atmosphere that foreshadows the tragic ending. Through a web of six main themes, three of which use solo instruments in the leading melody, it helps to identify characters and situations that are later brought back to allow the narrative recollect past events and propel the plot forwards. The diegetic role of some of the dance tunes frames some events within the context of a dance that takes place in the story. By contrast, the non-diegetic waltz and tango add important associations between the events in the plot and both internal and external connotations of the two dance forms. These broad considerations about the role of the music in the narrative are exemplified in many particular instances of specific moments in the narration of the story. I will frequently refer to them in my analysis, using this first general approach as their frame of reference.

### 3.6 Programme Notes and Title

The score as well as the other materials that I have been discussing in this chapter so far (the literary and film sources, and the scenario) are important resources for the study of the process of modelling the storyworld of *The Invitation* but none of them are usually available to the audience in advance of the performance. Some of the details about the story and the plot are, however, introduced beforehand through the title and the programme notes. Although they are not part of the dance work and they use a medium (written language) that differs from that of the performance, the title and the programme notes stem from the conception of theatrical dance as a performance that takes place in the theatre in front of an audience and is subject, as such, to certain social conventions. The practice of embedding some narrative information in the title and the programme notes for the spectator prior to the performance is part of those social codes. Since in *The Invitation* both of them follow the conventions historically developed in dance and drama, I will provide a brief outline of that historical evolution and its theoretical exploration before I proceed to analyse the aspects of the story and the plot incorporated in them in this case.

As Manfred Pfister discusses for drama, the title of a play (and this applies to dance too) can provide advance information that ranges from a reference to a central character (*Hamlet*), to a moral judgement on him (*L'Avare*), to the dominant atmosphere (*Twelve Night*), to a central element in the plot (*Waiting for Godot*), or to a way of evaluating the action (*La vida es sueño*) (1988: 42). As a generic expectation, the author can strategically provide it only to subvert it afterwards, in the play itself. Breaking the conventions initially suggested drives the attention to

the information value of the deviating elements. An example is *Measure for Measure*, whose title leads the spectator 'to expect an Old Testament pattern of value judgements, an expectation that is refuted and transcended in the play itself, rather than fulfilled' (1988: 42).

In general terms, the advanced information provided by the title has a thematic nature that can be enhanced by the main text of the play with intertextual references to dramatic, mythical or historical texts that the dramatist can safely assume familiar to the intended audience (1988: 43). In dance, intertextuality in the title is frequently linked to intertextuality in the story narrated in the ballet, such as in the frequent dance adaptations of well-known tales or plays (*The Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo and Juliet*). The audience's prior knowledge of the characters and the events in the story makes the information given in the dance or play itself to some extent redundant (1988: 43). However, this redundancy has, according to Pfister, a twofold function. First, the discrepancy between the ignorance of the characters and the awareness of the audience creates dramatic irony. Second, it releases the attention of the audience to appreciate the particular variant and interpretation of the work (1988: 43). In dance, this second dimension is particularly relevant, since it can help to place the focus on the 'discourse' level of the narrative, especially on the choreography, the dancing qualities of the movements on stage, and the particular performance of each dancer.

In addition to the title, in dance, the role of providing advanced information that helps in the process of interpreting meaning has traditionally been fulfilled by the libretti for dance (Franko: 2005). Antecedents of the current programme notes, the sixteenth and seventeenth century libretti provided a general synopsis of the court



entertainments, in which spoken and sung acts alternated with interludes of dance. The libretti gave direct insight into the themes, characters and structure of the performance and only indirect glimpses of the dance (Franko: 2005). In the eighteenth century, with the increasing importance of ballet as an independent art form, they significantly grew in size, reaching up to forty pages that explicated the plot in detail, described the scenery and, to some extent, depicted the movement performed (Chazin-Bennahum: 2005). The role fulfilled by the libretti was widely debated in mid-eighteenth century France. The two leading figures in the debate were dance masters Jean-George Noverre (1727-1810) and Gasparo Angiolini (1731-1803). The former advocated the existence of detailed libretti written by the choreographers themselves to complement the dance on stage while the latter defended the power of dance to express the story without the assistance of a printed pamphlet (Chazin-Bennahum: 2005). Although Noverre's view prevailed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and many-paged, minutely detailed libretti remained the norm (Chazin-Bennahum: 2005), in the twentieth century, reformers such as Michel Fokine insisted that the story be legible in terms of movement alone (Au: 2005). Libretti evolved into programme notes, which were not intended to explain the dance work to the audience but might offer some advanced information. Nowadays, they can contain synopses of the story, epigraphs, extracts of poetry or prose, or musical or historical analysis. The choreographer, the composer or another person may comment on the work but most of the narrative information is left to the dance (Au: 2005).

*The Invitation* follows this tradition of allowing the dance to carry most of the narrative power and, accordingly, the programme notes of the ballet, succinct and brief, only fulfil the function of providing some advanced information to the

audience. They do not mention the literary or film sources of the ballet but they include a list of characters, with the cast of dancers who perform them, and a synopsis of the story. The characters have no proper name so that the audience cannot infer any substantial clue about the story through the generic nouns used to introduce them (the Girl, the Boy, etc.). Most of the advanced information is thus provided by the brief synopsis. Drafted not by MacMillan but by dance critic Arnold Haskell<sup>13</sup>, it outlines some of the features of the storyworld and the main narrative lines of the story. Without disclosing the key events in the plot, the summary gives a veiled hint of them, insinuating some of the sombre aspects of the story. It characterizes the storyworld as 'strangely disturbing', thus introducing a connotation of mystery and tragedy that is confirmed by the description of the interference of the 'disillusioned' married couple as a 'sudden entanglement' with the two adolescents. The actual denouement of that complicated situation is not fully revealed. The Boy/Wife affair is vaguely implied (the Boy is 'flattered by the older woman's interest') and the Girl's terrible fate is merely suggested by uncovering that the Husband 'pursues her' and later 'turns to violence'. Although this allusion to violence might be a clear reference to the rape for someone who has already seen the ballet, beforehand, however, it is not explicit enough for the audience to foresee it. Even if the tragic consequences are mentioned ('she shrinks' from the Boy when he returns to her; 'for her, nothing can ever be the same'), the shape and extent of the act of violence is not specified.

The positive connotations in the title of the ballet add more ambiguity to the vagueness of the synopsis. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English, an invitation is, in its more general sense, 'a written or verbal request inviting someone to go somewhere or to do something: ... *a herb garden where guests can*

*only go at the invitation of the chef* (Stevenson, 2010). It therefore usually announces the prospect of participating in something good, in something one normally looks forward to. On its second sense, the word 'invitation' can have, however, an unpleasant undertone. It refers to 'a situation or action that tempts someone to do something or makes a particular outcome likely: *tactics like those of the colonel would have been an invitation to disaster*' (Stevenson, 2010). Whereas the first sense of the word is usually preceded by the definite article 'the', the second is more frequently used with the indefinite 'an'. Since in the title of MacMillan's ballet the term is preceded by the definite article 'the', it might seem plausible that it more directly points to the first, general sense of the word. When the title is considered in isolation, as the main advanced information that frames the story that is going to be represented for the audience, there is no specific sign to alert about a possible deviation from that first, positive sense of the term. When considered in conjunction with the synopsis in the programme notes, there is a first hint that the story might not agree with that expectation. The clash between the title and the vague, unsettling synopsis introduces an intriguing divergence of meanings that anticipates the unexpected twists in the story but still offers no clues about the actual outcome. The specific aspect of the plot that the title is referring to remains a mystery for the audience before the curtains go up. Only on reflection, after the story has been completely unfolded at the end of the ballet, can the exact sense of the information conveyed by the title acquire a plausible meaning. I shall return to it and venture a post-performance interpretation of its meaning in chapter eight.

## CHAPTER 4: TIME

### 4.1 Introduction

The second of the four defining principles of David Herman's notion of narrative, introduced earlier as a framing concept of this thesis, alludes to the temporal dimension of stories. Narratives are organized as sequences of events that follow one another. Time passes in the storyworld according to certain rules, which can resemble the temporal rules of the real world or be entirely fictional. Similarly, the events in the plot of a narrative take place in a specific spatial location. The story happens in a particular space, which can include a whole universe (even several galaxies) or the tiny area of a room; only one location or multiple. In addition, time and space are also coordinates governing the process of telling or representing the story. Reading a novel or watching a performance is an act which takes place in time and which is presented in space (in the space of the pages of a book or in the space of the stage in the case of a performance). In this sense, narratives unfold in time and in space. These two aspects of time and space (narratives as time-space sequences of events and unfolding in time and space) refer to the two basic temporalities and spatialities of narrative, 'story' time and 'discourse' time (Bridgeman, 2007: 53); 'story' space and 'discourse' space.

This chapter refers to the temporal dimensions of *The Invitation*. Placed just after the initial approach to the story and the plot of the ballet in the preceding chapter, it concentrates on time as a basic narratological category that helps to unravel some key aspects of the narrative, such as the temporal contextualization of the story narrated in the ballet and the narrative strategies that shape the discourse that conveys it in time. Chapter five will mirror this chapter in addressing similar

questions in relation to space. It will then include an introduction with the particular theoretical background that is necessary to fully support the analysis of the spatial aspects of the ballet. Here, I provide a similar overview in relation to time. The following paragraphs complete the conceptualization of the basic distinction between story time and discourse time just introduced.

The study of the temporal relationships between the two facets of time (story time and discourse time), as they are encoded in the plot, owes much to the seminal work of French structuralist Gérard Genette (1980). He postulates three areas in which these relationships manifest: order, duration and frequency. They, respectively, refer to the order of the events in the story, how long they last and how often they occur. On a closer look at these three notions, Genette suggests that order depicts the order in which the events are arranged. Some events happen *before* while others are disclosed *after* (1980: 35). One event opens the narrative and one event closes it. I have already mentioned the privileged position of the beginnings and endings in the plot, which Genette stresses again with the example of the powerful beginning *in medias res* of *The Iliad* (1980: 36).

More interestingly, on comparing the order in which events are arranged in the narrative discourse with the succession that these same events have in the story, Genette finds discordances between the two temporal orders. These *anachronies* are chiefly of, but are not limited to, two different kinds: *analepsis* and *prolepsis* (1980: 40). Analepsis occurs when events that happen in the order ABC are told in the order BCA or BAC (Herman, 2007b: 275). Prolepsis is the opposite concept. It occurs when events that happen in the order ABC are told in the order ACB or CAB

(Herman, 2007: 281). The equivalent in films of these concepts is flashback and flashforward.

Secondly, the notion of duration illustrates the connection between the time of the sequence of events in the story and the pace of their presentation in the discourse (Bridgeman, 2007: 54). Variations in duration can be used to show which scenes are most important. A scene which is narrated briefly will usually be considered less important than a scene which takes much discourse time to narrate (Bridgeman, 2007: 54). The main categories of duration are: descriptive pause (maximum discourse time, zero story time), slow-down or stretch (discourse time greater than story time), scene (discourse time equal to story time), summary (discourse time less than story time) and ellipsis (zero discourse time, variable story time) (Bridgeman, 2007: 58).

The third main concept in relation to time, frequency, alludes to the number of times an event is narrated. *Repetition* involves more than one occurrence at the level of the discourse of a single story event, while *iteration* involves the single telling of multiple events (Bridgeman, 2007: 59). Repetition can be used to portray more than one view of the same events and iteration can stress the repetitive nature of the events of the story making them not worthy to be detailed in each instance (Bridgeman, 2009: 59).

The content of this chapter is organized following these conceptual considerations. Two different sections address the two main categories of time in narrative, story time and discourse time. The former reflects on the time of the story, commenting on the relevance of its temporal location: the story takes place in one day, during carnival time and at the turn of the century. The latter focuses on the temporal

arrangement of the plot, analysing the linear order of events, their duration, and the main foreshadowing cues, including the hypodiegetic narrative embedded in the plot. For the first time in this thesis, both sections of this chapter include particular examples that dissect the elements of the dance, illustrating how the temporal markers of the narrative are conveyed to the audience.

## **4.2 Time of the Story**

### **4.2.1 Edwardian Era**

According to the scenario, the story of *The Invitation* takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although there is no direct reference to this temporal location in the programme notes and, in the performance, the epoch is chiefly conveyed through Nicholas Georgiadis' costumes, not entirely historically accurate, the ballet was unanimously interpreted as happening under the temporal coordinates of the British turn of the century: the Edwardian era (1901-1910). The location of the performance in London, by the Royal Ballet, for a British audience might be behind this interpretation which prevails in all the literature related to the ballet<sup>1</sup> and which coincides with the temporal frame selected by MacMillan. The main source for the audience to determine the time of the story is Georgiadis' designs for the costumes, which are the most historically accurate elements of his predominantly abstract designs for the ballet. He did not intend to create an exact replica of the Edwardian period, though (Georgiadis E., 2004: 27). He himself defined his approach as 'verismo', since he sought to remain close to reality but not necessarily achieving a total accuracy (Georgiadis quoted in Georgiadis E., 2004: 95). He therefore worked in general terms with the costumes, retaining enough

touches to establish the Edwardian era (high-necked bodice, vestigial leg-of-mutton sleeves and high piled hair) but with abstract elements decorating them (Woodcock, 2002a: 107) (see Picture 1 in Appendix 1). The skirt of the Wife, for instance, was cut with a certain freedom, since the diagonal cut and open side was dictated by the needs of the dancer, not the demands of the period (Woodcock, 2002a: 107). The costumes for the men, too, contained clear references to Edwardian times, resembling the clothes then in fashion for Teddy boys, which intentionally looked back to the Edwardian era and updated its designs for contemporary Londoners (late 1950s and early 1960s) (Parry, 2009: 230). The coincidence in styles helped the story to be felt as something close and contemporary, rather than distant and from the past, by the audience who saw the ballet at the time of its première (Parry, 2009: 230).

Certain mores and customs of the Edwardian age resonate in some of the events in the plot, a circumstance that might have also helped the audience to locate the story in that period. In the Edwardian upper class, marriages were frequently based on little more than a desire to preserve the financial and social position of the family and, consequently, extramarital affairs were a common practice (Buckley, 1979: 139). Society was far more permissive with men than with women, who were expected to handle the affair discreetly, to avoid scandal. Divorce was not an easy option, for it was considered a source of shame and insecurity for the family (Buckley, 1979: 139). Most women therefore accepted the conventional social and moral standards, even if these implied, for women, hiding their feelings under a façade of good manners and accepting double standards for men and women (Buckley, 1979: 140). These aspects of Edwardian life frequently feature in representations of the era and therefore marriages of convenience, extramarital



affairs and hypocritical behaviours abound in fictions set in the period, such as Oscar Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband* (1895), Vita Sackville-West's novel *The Edwardians* (1930) or, closer to dance audiences, Antony Tudor's ballet *Jardin aux lilas* (1936) or Frederick Ashton's *A Wedding Bouquet* (1937). The popularity of these works might have helped the spectators of *The Invitation* to detect easily the temporal setting of the ballet, matching the clues coming from the costumes.

#### **4.2.2 Carnival Time**

Within the general temporal framework of the Edwardian period, the events of the story happen during Carnival time, according to the scenario. This piece of information is, however, not easily perceptible for the audience. It is disclosed more than mid-way in the chain of events (in dance numbers 11 and 12), through a troupe of acrobats that visit the party in the evening and represent a brief interlude. The rest of the guests are not disguised, so only the costumes of the entertainers, in bright colours and taking the shapes of different animals, and the disruption that the content of their representation produces in the storyworld are references that could possibly point at a Carnival time. The temporal markers are therefore tenuous and difficult to grasp in their full extension. Yet the function of the interlude still preserves the spirit of Carnival, challenging the values and mores introduced earlier in the ballet<sup>2</sup>. Because a Carnival mood is behind the conception of this episode (as the scenario reflects) and is behind the function that it plays in the story, the work of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin can help unravel its features and significance in the ballet.

According to Bakhtin, who conceptualised the carnival in his work on François Rabelais, carnival is an officially sanctioned holiday from the usual order of things.

The carnival spirit celebrates 'the temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it mark[s] the suspension of all the hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions' (1984: 10). It is externally linked to the feasts of the Church, but also has a genetic connection to the ancient pagan festivities, agrarian in nature (1984: 8).

Bakhtin's formulation of the carnivalesque includes the concept of 'grotesque realism' which centres on the body, its orifices and functions (Weitz, 2009: 187). It involves 'the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of the earth and the body..., [which is] the level of food, drink, sexual life and the bodily phenomena linked with them' (1984: 19). The bodily hierarchy is turned upside down, with the lower body replacing the upper stratum (where mouth and mind are located). This lower sphere acquires thus a positive meaning, a regenerating power (1984: 309) that makes carnival 'the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal' (1984: 10)

The role of sexual life as one of the main functions of the grotesque body that is in the process of becoming is especially evident in the use of carnival images related to the masculine genitals. Since through these organs the body outgrows its own self, transgressing its own boundaries, the sexual act is performed on the confines of the body and the outer world (1984: 317). This liminal topography of the sexual activity and the transgressive nature of the phallic images are especially present in the carnival stories of sexual transgression or 'depravity' (1984: 310).

Because of their obvious sensuous character and their strong element of play in reversing the prevailing order, carnival images closely resemble certain artistic forms, namely the spectacle (1984: 7). The link between carnival and artistic

practices is especially exploited in *The Invitation*, where the carnival values are introduced by a troupe of artists who arrive at the house in the evening to perform a miniature dance that represents a story with strong sexual connotations.

Disguised as hens, cocks and chickens, the carnival acrobats burst into the stage just after the long dancing lesson, which has progressed from an innocent class of social conventions to the Girl and Husband's overt flirtation in public. Following this incipient sign of improper behaviour, the arrival of the acrobats is marked by a curtain drop and a sudden change in the music, which abruptly becomes lively, even frenzied. The explosive entrance of the artist hints at the revolution that their arrival at the storyworld is about to provoke<sup>3</sup>. The dance interlude that they enact possesses the transgressive and sexual connotations of the carnival imagery depicted by Bakhtin. It describes a contest between two cockerels where the prize for the winner is to gain sexual access to a hen. Both contenders fight with animal ferocity, their blows punctuated by the percussive notes in the score. At some point, their combat is interrupted by the hen-reward. She separates them and dances a seductive dance to a silky melody on the saxophone. After she flirts with the two of them, she chooses one and they consummate their pairing.

This representation of sex stands in stark contrast to the way sex has been previously introduced in the ballet. In the first dance number, the authoritarian Mother orders her eldest daughters to cover the naked statues, the vision of their nude bodies thus removed from the eyes of the children. Her action reflects a repressive attitude towards sex that conceives it as something to be concealed from adolescents rather than to be accepted as a normal step in their process of maturation. The portrayal of sex in the only *pas de deux* between adults in the

ballet, the Husband and his Wife (No. 6), is not very positive either. Their cold, rough duet evidences that their sexual life is not satisfactory, especially for the Wife.

In contrast with these inhibiting and unfulfilling perspectives, the carnival troupe offers a different vision of sex: it is natural, as the mating fight between the cockerels suggests, and it can be sensual, as the sensuous dance by the hen denotes. The uninhibited exhibition of her body offers, in addition, a distinct counterpoint to the image of the naked statues covered with white drapes. The nude body is not an indecent taboo to be hidden but a treasured reality to be rejoiced. In consonance with the carnival values, the carnival divertissement is a call for the liberation from the strict moral values and for the celebration of the body and its sexual instincts. This new atmosphere of carnality immediately permeates the storyworld. Just after the carnival representation ends, everybody leaves in various directions in a search of the proper partner, including the two eldest sisters, finally liberated from the iron hand of their Mother. Within this enthusiastic mass surrender to sex, the action finally centres on the seduction of the Boy by the Wife. This encounter fulfils the premises announced by the carnival performance. It breaks several boundaries (social, generational and marital) and promises a new horizon for the two characters involved. The Boy becomes a man; the Wife enjoys a tender sexual experience she is lacking in her marriage.

#### **4.2.3 One Day. Day and Night**

The Carnival festive evening that represents a turning point in the chain of events in the ballet also marks a temporal shift in the immediate chronological framework of the story. All the events in *The Invitation* happen in just one day and the group of

dancers arrive in the evening, the phase between day and night. The passage of time from morning, to afternoon, evening and night is mainly suggested in the ballet through the use of colours in the costumes and set designs. The bright green in the sets for the garden suggest morning or early afternoon; the orange coming through the windows of the house in the designs for the 'outside the house' space evokes a sunset; and the deep blue sky with the moon in the background in the scene of the rape clearly indicates night time.

Symbolically, the colours in the three different dresses that the Girl wears in the ballet also recall the different moments of the day. Her dress in the garden is white with spots of sunny bright yellow; during the dance lesson she wears a white dress with cobalt blue smudges; and she is dressed in a pale blue nightgown when she loses her virginity at night. The suggestion of time passing in the Girl's costumes parallels her evolution in the ballet from an innocent girl in the garden, through an infatuated adolescent in the dancing lesson, to the tragic victim of a rape in the last scene.

### **4.3 Discourse Time**

#### **4.3.1 Linear Order. No Analepsis**

The plot of *The Invitation* respects the order of the temporal phases of the day, morning, afternoon, evening, night. Unlike Beatriz Guido's novel and Eduardo Torre Nilsson's film, on which the ballet is partially based, MacMillan does not start his ballet with a brief scene in present time pointing out directly to one of the nuclei of the plot, the rape, then narrated retrospectively in flashback. He dispenses with the analepsis that allows that anochrony in the plot of the novel

and in the film, and his choice for a chronological linear rendering instead is a first important narrative decision. In the brief first scene in Guido's novel, Ana (the Girl in *The Invitation*) is having a coffee with her rapist Pablo (the antecedent of the Husband) and from the icy manners between them, the fear that paralyses her in his presence, and the coldness of her tone, the reader learns then three things about her story: that something terrible has happened to her, that Pablo had something to do with it, and that it has had an immense psychological impact on her. After this introductory scene, Ana starts to recollect the memories of her misfortune. In analepsis, she remembers episodes from her childhood and adolescence leading to the rape. In a final scene, Ana returns briefly to the present. Through her words in the closing passages of the novel, the reader, now aware of the exact details of the violent act of which she has been victim, learns the extent of her psychological damage. She has become an isolated person with a stigma that has cut her off from the rest of the world.

The film *The House of the Angel* transforms the fragmented, non-chronological recollection of memories of the novel into a linear account, but it maintains the flashback, using the scenes in present time at the beginning and at the end of the film with the same triple purpose as the novel: to announce the tragedy that is about to be presented, to point at Pablo as responsible for it and at Ana as the severely damaged victim.

In both cases, the plot starts with a direct reference to a constituent event in the ballet, an option that MacMillan discards and substitutes for a quiet introduction with supplementary events of the story. The triple information that the novel and the film present in the scenes framing the flashback is still maintained in the ballet,

but narrated differently, through the use of several foreshadowing cues, many of them warning about the evil nature of the Husband, and through the addition of a long last episode that shows the immediate consequences of the events in the story. Without the temporal shift provoked by the analepsis and the opening emphasis on the rape, the dramatic impact of the story in the ballet is more progressively disclosed and highly concentrated on the power of one single event, the violent climax. Several visual, aural and kinetic foreshadowing cues gradually announce the progression towards that tragic ending, so that even if not disclosed at the beginning, the denouement is not entirely unexpected.

#### **4.3.2 Foreshadowing Cues**

Design introduces an important harbinger of the rape in the scene in the garden, where the Girl and her group of friends play at the beginning of the ballet. She is the youngest in the group and the rest mock her when she blushes in front of the naked body of a statue. These innocent games, revealing the adolescents' natural curiosity about sexuality, take place in front of a backcloth that adds important information to the theme of sexual discovery that is being introduced. The dark circular tangled lines painted over the bright green background of the backcloth add an air of mystery to the scene (see Picture 2 in Appendix 1). They suggest trees populating the garden but also evoke an impending twisted future for the youngsters. Significantly, the rape will take place not very far from this location, in a hidden space whose backcloth develops this motif of tangled lines. With a dark blue in the background, the dominant element of the composition is even denser twisted black lines (see Picture 3 in Appendix 1).

The music is also an important herald of the tragedy. The very first bars of the score, played by the orchestra before the curtain opens, have a distressing menacing tone. The discordant notes played with *sordina* by the trumpets are a hint of the disturbing story that is about to be performed. This alarming quality, which is sometimes diluted to a quieter air of mystery, slips into the music every time an action or a gesture has a relevant connection with the gradual disclosure of the tragedy. It sounds, for instance, when the Mother orders the covering of the statues or when the children play in front of them.

More clearly, a bit later, when the Husband is introduced in the story, a weighty melody in the horns is attached to his presence on stage. The tune has sounded a bit earlier, at the beginning of the scene of adults, its sinister solemnity highlighting then the disruption of the children's games by the guests. When the melody sounds again as soon as the Husband enters onstage and is played, this time, by an instrument with a more authoritarian voice, the horns, it points the finger at him. The ominous gravity of the melody emerges in the moment when the rhythmic arrangement of the tune is in units of five notes, showing a pattern of three syncopated notes (semiquaver-quaver-semiquaver) followed by a minim tied to a quaver. The pitch contour has an uneven saw-like shape with big pitch jumps between notes (See Musical Example 3 in Appendix 2). To the menacing quality that arises from these qualities, dance conventions add another indicator of warning. In ballet, especially nineteenth-century, horns are frequently associated with situations of hunt (Jordan, 2000: 68). This connotation, which might be perceived by the members of the audience most exposed to ballet conventions, such as ballet goers or reviewers, help attribute, in this case, a predatory trait to the Husband. As a foreshadowing cue, the 'sinister' melody that welcomes the



Husband onstage exposes his dark hidden nature, contradicting the good image arising from his attractive appearance and the warm greetings that he receives from the Girl's family. The music exposes his two-faced nature, giving a hint about his future behaviour in the story.

In addition to design and music, some kinetic cues carry foretelling connotations too. For instance, the murky personality of the Husband is confirmed through movement not long after his introduction in the story, when in a private scene with his Wife, he is dominant and rough with her. The choreography introduces in this duet two violent sequences that not only show his lack of consideration towards his Wife but also anticipate the rape. Firstly, in a coarse embrace with sexual connotations, he flings his robust arms around his wife's body, holding her firmly against his hips. He easily neutralizes her useless efforts to escape, demonstrating that he possesses a physical power that he does not hesitate to use in order to have women's bodies at his mercy (see Picture 4 in Appendix 1). Secondly, his brutality with his Wife in terms of sexual habits is made more evident, hinting at the damage that he will also cause to the Girl, when he places her body again against his hips and twists it 'so that she arches backwards into a knot around him' (Parry, 2009: 229). The movement looks unnatural and the Wife projects an image of great suffering, revealing the devastating effects that the Husband can produce. The music also contributes to stress the ruthlessness and harmful impact of the action, for it underlines the movements with the use of dissonant chords and a marked increase in dynamics.

These two moments in the choreography of the Husband and Wife's *pas de deux* will later be reproduced and developed further in the rape scene. Their earlier

introduction in the narration of the story is thus an important clue to the tenor of that climactic moment of the ballet. Significantly, the two young cousins witness the end of this scene, their mute presence in a corner of the stage reinforcing the link between these foreshadowing signs and their future fate in the ballet.

### ***Hypodiegetic Narrative***

In a much more enigmatic way, the Carnival scene also possesses some foreshadowing power, embedded in its hypodiegetic narrative. Not only does the cockerels' fight project new values to the main narrative level, as suggested earlier, but also gives some veiled hints about the future evolution of the story. It connects sex with violence, the two elements that characterize the rape, and, in a way, it anticipates the behaviour of the Wife through the conciliatory and sensuous performance of the hen. Despite these indicators, however, the interlude lacks any direct reference to the destiny of the young protagonists of the main narrative level and this might be the reason why its role as a harbinger of the ensuing action is rather weak and why its function in the ballet has repeatedly been questioned. MacMillan's biographer Jann Parry echoes the voices that find it 'tedious' and 'inexplicable'. She suggests that it causes 'a structural problem' to the ballet, since it unnecessarily holds up the story (2009: 227). The analysis of the interlude from the perspective of its value as a foreshadowing cue reveals, however, that its structural flaw is internal, rather than external, for the three-character action that it contains fails to establish a clear, direct link to the characters in the main narrative level of the narrative, where no similar tri-figure situations can be found. Let me elaborate further on this argument:

In theory, the insertion of a secondary level of fiction into the primary level can give rise to a large number of relations between the two of them. In drama, Manfred Pfister (1988), who borrows the systematic typology of play-within-the-plays from J. Voight, argues that there is one criterion that is particularly useful to analyse those relationships: the links between the various characters on those two levels (224). The relationships between the hierarchically arranged plots is tenuous when the play-within-the play is performed by a separated set of characters, that is, when the actors representing the play either never appear in the main level or, if they do, then only on the periphery (as in *Hamlet*, for instance) (224). The connection between the two levels is more direct when the set of characters are identical, that is, when the actors in the play-within-the-play are characters in the primary level (i.e., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) (225). The role of the fictional spectators also helps to elucidate the strength of the connection. The fictional audience can be simply present on stage and remain silent (*The Taming of the Shrew*) or comment on the representation that they observe, either on its aesthetic aspects only (as in Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*) or on the implications for the events in the main narrative level in which they participate (*Hamlet*) (225). In addition to those two quantitative criteria, Pfister stresses the importance of analysing the connection between levels in functional and qualitative terms. The play-within-the-play might just form a brief episode in the play as a whole and the links with the primary characters might just be tenuous but the hypodiegetic narrative can be closely linked up with the action on the primary level (as in *Hamlet*, where the protagonist arranges the performance in order to pass judgement on the murder of his father) (227). Or it might be fully integrated into a system of equivalent structures, with similar thematic and

situational concerns at all narrative levels, as in the amorous confusions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the embedment of stories allows for the presentation of two different solutions to the same type of conflict (one comic, the other tragic) (228).

In *The Invitation*, the relationships between the hypodiegetic narrative and the main narrative level are tenuous in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The characters of the cockerels' flight are played by characters of the main level, the acrobats who arrive at the Girl's house to perform a show, intermingling with the guests for the rest of the evening. Their role at that primary narrative level is, however, very secondary, almost anecdotal. The audience of the dance-within-the-dance is not especially involved in the performance either. In the original staging, they are absent from the stage when the performance takes place and no sign of their immediate reaction to it is ever provided. In the 1966 reworking of the number, the presence of the audience is visible, since the guests, seated in chairs, surround the acrobats (now reduced to three). Yet, they still remain passive spectators, with a minimal engagement with the performance. Crucially, none of the four major characters are present in the scene.

Qualitatively, the link between the action in the interlude and the action in the main narrative level is not particularly strong either. Within the macrostructure of the ballet, the dance-within-the-dance takes place mid-point (in Nos. 11 and 12), once the core theme of sexual initiation has already been introduced and has been partially developed. The infatuation between the Girl and the Husband has reached a peak point in their dance together in the previous number (No. 10) and the relationship between the Boy and the Wife has been insinuated through fortuitous

contact and intense glances across Nos. 7 to 10. The two couples that will participate in the two intergenerational affairs have already been formed and their sexual encounter has already been suggested. The carnival divertissement does not, however, include any couple with similar features or any allusion to the possible denouement of these incipient relationships. Instead of using the interlude to continue the narrative evolution of the two main affairs, MacMillan opts for momentarily stopping the narrative focus on the two main plotlines, connecting the episode not with the immediate preceding action but with some descriptive situations introduced much earlier in the ballet. This distant connection allows the interlude to reverse the attitude towards sex presented in No. 1 and later subtly maintained in No. 3 (through the presence of the covered statues) and in Nos 7 to 10 (through the watching role of the Governess). The key role that the divertissement plays in the macrostructure of the ballet, bringing the values that change the atmosphere and propitiate the sexual encounters, is based in this thematic link between the two narrative levels.

Yet the interlude could have made a greater contribution to the plot of the ballet had this thematic connection been reinforced by a microstructural link. As it is devised, the microstructure of the dance-within-the-dance does not reproduce any microstructure presented in the main narrative level. The interlude has three characters (two cockerels and one hen), a structure never found in the main story, where the Boy and the Husband never compete for the Girl (since the lack of experience in the Boy makes him shy away as soon as the Husband initiate his seductive manoeuvres) nor for the Wife (in whom the Husband is never interested). A structure with two characters in the interlude rather with three would have established a more direct and robust connection between the two

narrative levels in qualitative terms. The film version of the story provides a useful example to illustrate this point:

In the film *The House of the Angel*, Ana goes to the cinema and watches a film where a male character, played by actor Rudolph Valentino, first whips and then kisses his lover. Through close-ups, the film conveys Ana's reactions to both scenes, showing how she is deeply impressed by the intensity of the feelings. The connection between the two narrative levels is very strong. The characters in the film-within-the-film are not characters in the main story but the impact of the story-within-the-story in its spectator, Ana, is not only provided but also stressed through close-ups. In addition, the structure and the theme of the action in the hypodiegetic narrative reproduce the structure and the thematic content of the events in Ana's narrative level. She is in love with an older man and can therefore project to that relationship the features that she witnesses on the screen. The parallelism between the storylines of the two levels is thus easy to establish and when the rape takes place later, the role of the film-within-the-film as a foreshadowing clue of the denouement of Ana's story is clear.

The Carnival divertissement in *The Invitation* could have been constructed in similar terms, benefiting from its potential to anticipate the action. A shift from three to two characters (or to several couples performing similar overtly sexual movements) would establish a solid structural and thematic link with the preceding and the following action in the primary level. The parallelism in both form and content would allow the dance-within-the-dance to clearly anticipate the bacchanal into which the action in the main narrative level immediately drifts. Moreover, following the film antecedent, the interlude could also include a violent

incident between two lovers, enabling the link between the two narrative levels to be even stronger. A change not only in the microstructure but also in the story embedded in the hypodiegetic narrative could lead to an unequivocal, obvious reference to the core plotline of the ballet.

To sum up, the flaw in the Carnival divertissement that derives from the weak links between narrative levels could be solved in qualitative terms by a shift in the number of characters, perhaps followed by a slight change in the action too. The structural change would enable a direct correlation with the action at the main level, either with the bacchanal of the party only (if the action remains unchanged) or with the relationship of the Husband and the Girl too (if an incident with a couple is added). In both cases the structural shift would reinforce the role that the Carnival interlude already possesses in the macrostructure of the ballet while, at the same time, would develop the potential for foreshadowing that it possesses but is never fully fulfilled.

#### **4.3.3 Duration**

The narrative category of time in its variant of discourse time, which embraces the considerations on the linear arrangement of the plot and on the use of foreshadowing cues this far discussed in this chapter, also comprises attention to the manipulation of the temporal duration of the events in the plot. As a narrative strategy, the expansion, contraction and suspension of the time of the discourse help to give emphasis to some events and to take it away from others. In *The Invitation*, the way in which Kenneth MacMillan allocates more discourse time to some dance numbers than to others reveals that the events with more relevance within the structural theme of the ballet (the passage from childhood to

adulthood) are the upbringing environment of the two adolescents, the emergence of the seductions and their consequences (See Chart 2).

<b>Dance Numbers</b>	<b>Approximate Duration</b>
Scene 1: Garden with statues, turn of century, carnival time	
1. Mother and two Daughters	4:30 min
2. Girl and Boy	3:05 min
3. Group of Children	4:00 min
4. Adults	3:10 min
5. <i>Pas de deux</i> : Boy and Girl	2:45 min
Scene 2: Inside the house	
6. <i>Pas de deux</i> : Married Couple	2:40 min
7. Dancing Lesson	3:45 min
8. Solo: Girl	1:10 min
9. General Scene. Adults	1:30 min
10. <i>Pas de deux</i> : Girl and Husband	2:50 min
Scene 3: Outside the House	
11. Carnival Scene	1:25 min
12. Divertissement. Cockerels' Fight	4:15 min
13. Boy's seduction by Wife	5:05 min
14. Carnival Guests	1:15 min
Scene 4: A Hidden Place in the Garden	
15. Girl's rape by Husband	6:50 min
Scene 5: Garden	
16. Carnival Guests. Husband and Wife. Boy and Girl. Girl alone	6:00 min

**Chart 2:** Duration of the dance numbers in *The Invitation*

Transcriptions from the score and the scenario with kind permission of the Mátyás Seiber Trust

The importance of the maternal role in the process of growing up is the first of those three relevant facts to be depicted. The pace in which the relationships



between the Children and their parents are introduced is slow. Dance numbers 1 (Mother and Two Daughters) and 4 (Adults) describe in detail the traits of those relations. Together, they last almost eight minutes out of the fifty four that *The Invitation* approximately lasts. In these two dance numbers, the story time and the discourse time closely correspond. This coincidence matches the descriptive character of the episodes. They depict the traits of the filial relations and no significant events happen during them since the brief action of covering the statues in No. 1 has a descriptive rather than an incidental nature. Its aim is not to make the action progress but rather to show the Mother's conservative stance towards sex. Similarly, the introductory scene of adults in No. 4 does not merely mark the arrival of guests to the house but, more importantly, gives hints about the relationships between the Children and their parents.

The descriptive tenor of these two scenes reinforces the importance MacMillan gives to the parental role as a background for the action. The fact that he devotes discourse time to describe not only the strict and authoritarian Mother responsible for the education of the Girl but also the family ties of the rest of her friends reveals how relevant the family is for the contextualization of the story. The slow pace of the action in these episodes and the insistence in portraying the affective upbringing of even the secondary characters of the ballet underlines the significance of the family background for the later development of the seductions. In fact, after providing this contextual information, the narrative interest in the children and their parents disappears, as the contraction of time in the actions in which these two groups participate demonstrates. The rest of the ensembles in the ballet (No. 7 –the dancing lesson-, No. 14 –Carnival guests-, and the beginning of No. 16 –Carnival Guests-) condense several events into a few minutes. The dance

lesson is an abridged version of the afternoon, with a few steps of the polka and the gallop standing for the whole dance, and the repeated entrance and exit of the Carnival guests in haste, in disorder and in couples in Nos. 14 and 16 summarizes the numerous lustful encounters happening during the long Carnival party. The main narrative role of the Children and the Adults in the plot ends after the initial descriptive episodes and turns merely anecdotal and contextual in the contracted excerpts at the end of the plot.

In contrast with these less significant events in the story, the discourse time is expanded during the important *pas de deux* that delineate the traits of the four central characters and unfold the two seductions. Here story time and discourse time correspond more closely again, allowing the traits and nuances of each of the relationships to arise unhurriedly. There are some differences between the temporal characteristics of each duet, however. The introduction of the young couple takes more discourse time than the introduction of the older couple. Actually, the former is done in two parts (No. 2 and No. 5), the first corresponding to the child traits still in the nature of the Girl and her Cousin, the second emphasizing their adolescent features. Together, these two episodes depicting their in-between stage in life last almost six minutes, twice as much as the introduction of the married couple. The *pas de deux* between the married couple condenses into two minutes and a half the description of their harsh emotional and sexual relationship. This temporal difference reflects the emphasis that the plot of this ballet places on the younger characters.

Additionally, there is a preference for the female characters since only the Girl and the Wife have solos (in Nos. 8 and 13), and, within the two sexual initiations, the

Girl's is depicted with greater detail than the Boy's. From this allocation of discourse time, the Girl and her journey emerges as the main narrative line of the ballet. The steps towards her seduction, the rape itself and its tragic aftermath take sixteen minutes and a half out of the total of the ballet and are disclosed at a slow pace in four different numbers (No. 9, No. 10, No. 15 and No. 16). In the sexual awakening of the Boy, the phases before and after the seduction are reduced to several quick glances or kisses, with no dance number of their own, and the encounter itself is narrated in three minutes of discourse time (No. 13). The pace is, however, unhurried, so that the encounter has enough importance to stand as the positive counterpoint to the rape.

#### **4.3.4 Time Suspension**

In order to emphasize key moments in the evolution of the two sexual encounters, MacMillan uses an important device related to the temporal dimension of the discourse level of the story: the elongation of the discourse time to the limit of almost suspension. Time seems to freeze in certain significant junctures where stillness or slow motion in the dancing and/or the music allows the narration of the story to concentrate relevant information in gestures or pictorial images with high narrative power. I will offer here two examples of this narrative strategy, illustrating how each contributes to the narration of an important event in the plot.

The first instance of time suspension comes from the most disruptive event in the plot: the meeting between the four central characters. The first time that they are confronted in the story, during the arrival of the adults to the house (No. 4), time is held to mark the fascination of the Girl for the Husband and the attraction of the Boy for the Wife. The Husband begins the sequence when, after inspecting the

group of Children in search of a nice face, he spots the Girl on the other side of the crowd. He calmly crosses the stage and approaches her. The Girl's reaction is to make a very slow curtesy bow while holding his stare. The intensity of the fixed gaze is interrupted by the Wife, who puts a restraining hand on his shoulder and then advances with a display of calculated charm to allow the Boy, impressed by her presence, to take her hand (Money, 1967: 202). Like the Girl's reaction, the Boy's gesture is very measured and sustained long enough to seem frozen in time. It is finally brought to an abrupt end by the Husband, who deliberately brushes aside the Boy's gesture, and by the Mother, who intervenes to take the Wife away.

The gestures in this sequence are not, however, the only components to convey the effect of time suspension. The temporal slowing down arises thanks to a combination of slow-paced movements with selective lighting and eloquent music. At the beginning of the sequence, a spotlight illuminates the Girl at the left of the stage<sup>4</sup>, so that when the Husband walks in her direction it seems that he is following a guiding star. When the Wife approaches her Husband, another spotlight highlights her movements, so when the Boy advances to greet her, his gesture is also stressed by the brightness of a light beam. For the brief but intense moments when the four characters confront each other for the first time the lighting isolates this point of action in the front left corner of the stage. To this visual emphasis the music adds an aural description of the action. The harp marks the beginning of the sequence with an air of mystery conveyed by an ascending melody that ends in suspension, with a long note that sustains the sound as the Husband reaches the place in front of the Girl and she starts her bow. A group of three soft chords still in the harp underlines the Girl's gesture until the four disruptive notes of the authoritative melody that has introduced the Husband

earlier in the number mark the intervention of the Wife. The musical emphasis is subtle, however, since the short tune is played timidly by the flute, not by the horns. The same musical sequence is then reproduced for the Boy's introduction to the Wife and the interruption of the Husband, although his interference is aurally stressed in the lower pitch of the clarinet to mark the gender difference.

The device of time suspension that this combination of gestures, lighting and music creates stresses a nucleus (or constituent) event of the plot. Up to this moment, the plot has introduced the background of the story only, depicting the adolescent state of the Boy and the Girl, and the atmosphere of repression in which they have been raised. With this meeting, the plot initiates the chain of events leading to their sexual initiation. The brief first meeting of the four central characters of the ballet is a turning point in the story and MacMillan emphasizes it by expanding the discourse time allocated to its narration.

The second instance of time freezing that I bring here illustrates how the strategy helps to stress the impact of the most important event in the plot, the rape, magnifying its consequences. This event has an essential significance in the plot, for it puts an end to the Girl's journey in the story. Since her storyline is the matrix of the plot, that event is the climax of the ballet and the moment with highest narrative power. Significantly, the precise moment of its consummation is narrated through a distressing quietness in both dance and music. After the fierce fight between the Husband and the Girl, time seems to stop abruptly when the Girl, in the knotted position around the Husband's waist that recalls the Wife's same posture earlier in the ballet, starts to slide down his legs at broken intervals (See Picture 5 in Appendix 2). Faltering notes, suggesting a similar effect of damaged

response, are heard from the music. A marked contrast arises between the Husband, who reaches orgasm at this moment, and the Girl, who is fatally hurt in the encounter. Crucially, the emphasis is placed on her. With a movement that produces a similar effect to that of a reverse shot<sup>5</sup> in a film, the Husband, who has been facing the audience during the violent moves preceding the consummation, turns his back on the audience just before the climax. The focus of attention is thus shifted from him to the Girl, who, knotted around his waist, remains semi-hidden behind his body, her suffering face, laced legs and arms exposed to the audience. These visible parts of her body concentrate the expressivity of the slow-paced action. Her stammering movements down and her troubled face render the severe damage caused to her.

The impression of suspension of discourse time in this short sequence and the high level of symbolic meaning that it possesses elaborate on a device that, as Jann Parry and other critics have pointed out, Balanchine had used years before to depict the end of the sexual act in *The Prodigal Son*<sup>6</sup> (1929) (Parry, 2009: 229). MacMillan's incorporation of that movement material is, however, more than a mere copy. He reworks the position at different levels, choreographing a sequence that is creatively new and completely adapted to his particular narrative purposes. In Balanchine's ballet, the woman's hooped position and descent down the man's legs (Parry, 2009, 229) illustrates the prodigal son's succumbing to lust. The focus is on him and on his reaction to the sexual movements of the woman. Facing the audience, he stands still and supports the body of the woman with no apparent effort. The movement that catches the attention of the audience is the elevation of his arms to the sky in a sign of satisfaction. The woman's head, visible by his right leg, is turned backwards, in a gesture that also suggests pleasure. The music in

Prokofiev's score is sweet and indicates continuity since it does not stop at this climax but keeps on sounding without placing any emphasis on the sequence. The steady progression of the melody while these unhurried movements take place reinforces the episodic nature of the moment. Discourse time is not sustained to place any relevance on it.

MacMillan's revision of this antecedent for *The Invitation* acquires two different shapes, one for the Husband/Wife introductory *pas de deux* and the other for the Husband/Girl ferocious duet. In the former, the knotted position does not denote any sexual gratification but, rather, gives evidence of the Husband's unwillingness to react to the Wife's efforts to attract his attention. In this case, both Husband and Wife face the audience, since she surrounds him not from his back, as in Balanchine's example, but from his front so that both her attempt to initiate the sexual encounter and his rude refusal to participate in it emerge in the same frontal plane of the Husband's body. In addition, the sequence of movements takes place at a normal pace and there is no deceleration in the music, although its emphatic dissonances invest the sequence with the foreshadowing power already commented.

In the second form of the movement imported from Balanchine, at the end of the Girl's rape, the position of the two characters differ from that earlier manifestation. The Girl's is around the Husband's frontal plane but forwards, not backwards, and the Husband does not face the audience. He offers his back and therefore the Girl's body is not unobstructedly exposed, but seen through his body. Unlike Balanchine's prodigal son, the Husband's face is not visible and the only movement that he makes is a head movement backwards suggesting orgasm. Unlike the Wife,

the Girl does not exhibit her body but parts of her limbs and face, only. And she is not motionless, either. Her broken motion sliding down the Husband is in fact the only motion on stage once the rape is consummated. The music matches her tremor, imposing a silence only broken by stumbling notes. Time is halted both kinetically and aurally to stress the tragic end. This temporal deceleration, absent in Balanchine's instance and in *The Invitation's* first example, contributes to the climatic effect that only this third manifestation of the knotted sequence possesses. In addition, the direction of the Girl's minimal movements adds an important connotation to this moment of shocking pause. While the prodigal son raises his arms to the sky suggesting sexual satisfaction and the Wife is shaken sideways by the Husband's body in a sign of rejection, the Girl slides down to the ground, illustrating the waste of her youthful innocence that is the appalling consequence of the rape.

To recapitulate, the differences in the body planes exposed to the audience, in the body parts in motion, in the direction of the movements and, especially, in the duration of the discourse time allow MacMillan's reworking of Balanchine's imagery to have a very different connotation and narrative role than its source. In *The Invitation*, MacMillan's two instances, the descriptive rudeness of the Husband and the shocking climax of the ballet, contribute to the narration of the story with much more narrative significance than the anecdotal satisfaction in the *Prodigal Son*.

In addition, the suspension of discourse time that stresses the plot relevance of this event is maintained in the immediately following action. Time is still suspended during the first moments of the aftermath in order to stress the magnitude of the



damage. The Husband and the Girl remain on stage, the Girl lying on the floor, the Husband kneeling down. They are a few meters apart, with two separate spotlights illuminating their motionless positions and highlighting the separation that the act has imposed on them. The pictorial composition is sustained for a few seconds and then extended during the slow movements that both characters make before the Husband leaves the scene. The pause in time allows the ending of the Girl's sexual initiation to stand in tragic and sharp contrast with previous instances of loving endings, such as the protective cuddle at the end of the first *pas de deux* of the cousins, the Wife and Boy's last embrace at the end of their encounter or, more poignantly, the Girl's gesture of infatuation at the end of the solo she dances for the Husband, when she ends kneeling at his feet, gazing up adoringly at him (See Picture 6 in Appendix 1). In addition to the visual contrast, the lengthy pause after the rape differs in narrative function. Unlike those instances, it does not mark the closure of the number but the transition to a new phase. It is inserted between the consummation of the rape and the Girl's first reactions after it, adding a last stress to the ferocity of the act before the action progresses to the portrayal of the Girl's physical and psychological damage. The ascending notes of the harp after a few seconds of distressing silence introduce the slow awakening after the crime. This unhurried transition, narrated at a slow pace, allows time for the audience to absorb the shock of the rape and to get ready for the ensuing depiction of the sequels.

## 4.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, the manipulation of the temporal dimension of the 'discourse' allows for several important narrative choices in *The Invitation*. The suspension of 'discourse' time during key moments of the narration of the story is a significant narrative strategy that Kenneth MacMillan uses to stress the core events in the plot of the ballet. These narrative pauses provide time for the audience to absorb the narrative information displayed onstage and reflect on the story narrated, especially at the end, when the tragic denouement of the Girl's story is disclosed. The unhurried pace in the narration of the last events in the story matches the descriptive tenor of the initial passages, which set the background where the tragedy takes place. The events in between the slow-paced beginning and ending have different durations, with a tendency of the narration to devote more discourse time to the events in which the Girl participates. The narrative progression towards the end is also full of numerous foreshadowing cues. Embedded in the choreography as well as in the music and in the design, these signs announcing the Husband's crime provide clues for the audience to foresee the last events in the plot, sustaining the narrative interest while the story unfolds. The hypodiegetic narrative inserted in the middle of the ballet does not help in this sense, though, since the microstructural flaw that it possesses temporarily stops the progression of the story. Linked to the main narrative level in thematic terms only, it fails to establish a stronger connection with the primary plot.

In the sphere of the story, the coordinate of time locates the events in the Edwardian era and at Carnival time. This temporal setting marks the values that govern the story, especially in relation to the libertine atmosphere that settles

midway through the narration. When the Carnival acrobats make their entrance onstage, the tone of the story shifts away from the repressive stance towards sex depicted in the opening numbers and into the liberating celebration of senses that dominate the last passages. The sexual encounters that follow the Carnival interlude culminate the transition from childhood to adulthood that structures the central plotline of the ballet. This core theme of passage is also reflected in the temporal development of the story across the different phases of one day. The temporal pattern of morning-afternoon-evening-night mirrors the process of maturation of the two protagonists of the ballet. The spatial coordinates of the story will also echo this thematic transition, as I will argue in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: SPACE**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Together with time, space is an essential narrative category to understand the fabric of storytelling (Bridgeman, 2007: 52). It goes beyond the mere description of the location of the story, just as time as a narrative category comprises much more than the description of the date in which the story takes place. The conceptualization of space covers several aspects<sup>1</sup> of which I will concentrate on two that parallel the distinction between 'story' time and 'discourse' time used in the preceding chapter. 'Story' space refers to the spatial background and location of the story whereas 'discourse' space indicates 'the space physically occupied by the narrative discourse' (Ryan, 2012).

The space of the story is 'the physically existing environment in which characters live and move' (Buchholz et al. 2005: 551). As the physical location in which the story develops, space has a concrete specific dimension, which can range from a single small place to a whole immense universe (Bridgeman, 2007: 60). Marie-Laure Ryan (2012) distinguishes five categories into which the narrative space can be subdivided: spatial frames (the various locations shown by the narrative), setting (the general socio-historic-geographical environment in which the action takes place), the story space (the space relevant to the plot, that is all the spatial frames plus all the locations mentioned by the text), narrative world (the story space completed by the reader's imagination on the basis of cultural knowledge and the real world experience) and the narrative universe (the world presented as actual by the text plus all the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams and fantasies).

In recent years, the study of spatial imagery has increasingly focused on the basic spatial schemata that underlie language and cognition (Ryan, 2012). From these studies, the notions of *paths*, *containers* and *portals* help to conceptualize different kinds of spatial frames. Teresa Bridgeman (2007) synthesizes Mark Johnson's work on paths and containers and Hilary Dannenberg's study on portals in order to provide examples of the narrative use of those concepts. Portals are in-between spaces connecting adjacent spaces, such as doorways, which allow characters entering or exiting a room, or windows, through which characters can observe and be observed (2007: 55). Paths physically link different locations; characters can use them to move around and as such not only do they impose a certain direction to their movement but also can be metaphorically linked to their goals in the story (2007: 55). Containers can have many different shapes such as rooms, houses, vehicles, etc. They might be public or private (2007: 61) and characters may be inside or outside them (2007: 55). In any case, the features of the container and the position that the characters have in them may be an element helping to explain their values, actions, feelings or behaviours.

The different areas of the narrative space can be attributed symbolic meaning. A castle may be associated with power, an open area with danger and a closed area with security, for instance (Ryan, 2012). The events and experiences depicted in the narrative might be organized around the symbolic organization of space to the point that the spatial arrangement can have an important plot function (such as in the opposition between town and country in Tolstoj's *Anna Karenina*) (Ryan, 2012). In addition to the potential for plot organization, the symbolic meaning attached to the various spaces of the narrative world might help to complete the characterization of its inhabitants. The way characters live and move in a

particular space can be an important clue about their social and psychological qualities (Gabriel Zoran quoted in Bridgeman, 2007: 55). A particular space can reflect the moral values of its inhabitants and the way characters take possession of it can be highly revelatory of their beliefs and principles. For instance, in dance, the use of expansive floor patterns or ample arm movements can be interpreted as indicative of the ease and command of a character in a particular place whereas small, intricate floor patterns and constrained arm movements can reveal the discomfort and lesser status of others. Furthermore, since the spatial elements usually possess a quality of relative permanence and tend to be relatively stable during the narrative, they can accumulate layers of past history against which the characters' subsequent activities can be read as the story progresses (Bridgeman, 2007: 56).

Unlike the relative quantity of studies on the two aspects of the 'story' space just presented (the spatial imagery and the spatial thematization or attribution of symbolic meaning), the research on 'discourse' space is almost non-existent in narratology. Ryan (2012) argues that Seymour Chatman's attempt to use the notion to describe the disclosure by the discourse of the space in which the story takes place refers in fact to the techniques of space presentation rather than to the 'space physically occupied by the narrative discourse'. She proposes to use the expression 'spatial extension of the text' instead, even if it does not correlate with Genette's notion of 'discourse' time. She argues that her proposal points with more clarity to 'the spatiality of the text as material object and to the dimensionality of the interface with the reader, spectator or user'. The spatial extension, in her conceptualization, ranges from zero spatial dimensions (music) to quasi one-dimensionality (a text displayed on a single line with letters moving from right to

left, as in television news lines), two-dimensionality (film) and three dimensionality (theatre, dance).

In this thesis, I will retain the expression 'discourse' space to refer to 'the space physically occupied by the narrative discourse' and will tentatively use it to illustrate how it can expose key narrative spatial strategies in *The Invitation*. But before I progress, I must specify that the notion of 'discourse' space just presented includes, although is not limited to, the choreographic space, which is an essential aspect of dance analysis. It refers to the space where the choreography unfolds, within and around the body of the dancer. Its analysis might comprise aspects such as the shape and size of the body, the spatial direction of an action, and the spatial pattern created over the ground and/or through the air by the body in motion (Adshead, 1988: 23). Here, I will limit the study of 'discourse' space to two aspects. On the one hand, I will explore the aspects of 'discourse' space suggested by narrative theory (dimensionality involved in dance narratives). On the other hand, I will provide one instance that exemplifies the symbolisation of the choreographic space for narrative purposes. The reader should be aware that it is not the only instance of spatial scrutiny of the choreography here, since it significantly features in the choreographic analysis presented across the thesis. For the purpose of this chapter, I will examine 'discourse' space and its contribution to narrative expressivity with the aid of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's concepts of image schemata and metaphors. By using this methodological framework, I will be following in the steps of other dance scholars such as Trevor Whittock (1992, 1995 and 1997) and Lorraine Nicholas (2014), who have shown that image schemata and metaphors are useful tools for dance analysis<sup>2</sup>. A brief introduction to Lakoff and Johnson's notions follows.

An image schema is a ‘recurrent, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience’ (Johnson, 1990: xiv). It exists at the level of generality and abstraction (as a pattern for organizing our experience and comprehension), but is grounded in our bodily experiences (1990: 23). For instance, the VERTICALITY schema emerges from our embodied experience to employ an UP-DOWN orientation in picking out meaningful structures of our experience. As Johnson explains:

We grasp this structure of verticality repeatedly in thousands of perceptions and activities we experience every day, such as perceiving a tree, our felt sense of standing upright, the activity of climbing stairs . . . and experiencing the level of water rising in the bathtub. The VERTICALITY schema is the abstract structure of these VERTICALITY experiences, images, and perceptions.

(Johnson, 1990: xiv)

We make use of the image schemata obtained in our physical experience to organize our more abstract understanding. Metaphors are an essential tool for this purpose. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are fundamentally conceptual in nature, not linguistic devices (2003: 272). They define them as ‘a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind’ (Johnson, 1990: xv). Thus, the VERTICALITY schema is projected, for instance, in the metaphor MORE IS UP, as in *prices keep going up* or *his gross earnings fell*. The metaphor implies to understand MORE (increase) as being orientated UP (1990: xv). Other metaphors can emerge from the same schema, as the following examples, taken from Lakoff and Johnson (2003), illustrate:

HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN: I’m feeling *up*. That *boosted* my spirits. I *fell* into a depression.



HAVING CONTROL OR FORCE IS UP; BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL OR FORCE IS DOWN: I have control *over* her. He's in a *superior* position. His power is on the *decline*.

GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN. WE hit a *peak* last year, but it's been *downhill* ever since. Things are at an all-time *low*. He does *high*-quality work. (2003: 15-16).

*The Invitation* contains several instances of the use of the choreographic space that can be explained through metaphorical projections of the VERTICALITY schema. The metaphors SEXUAL SATISFACTION IS UP; LACK OF SEXUAL SATISFACTION IS DOWN, and COMMAND IS UP; INSECURITY IS DOWN emerge, I will suggest, from the movements performed at a certain UP or DOWN spatial level of the stage. In figurative terms, the metaphors embodied by the dancers and displayed in the space, project the VERTICALITY schema in order to convey, symbolically, some narrative information. I will provide more details about these UP-DOWN metaphors at the end of section 5.3 of this chapter, which is devoted to the study of 'discourse' space. Previously, section 5.2 refers to the other aspect of space for narrative theory: the space of the story.

## **5.2 Space of the Story**

### **5.2.1 A Tropical Country**

In *The Invitation*, the events take place within a very restricted area, in and around the Girl's house in an unidentified tropical country. The exact location is, however, not provided. The first draft of the scenario included a reference to a Catholic South American country, probably due to the influence of the Argentinian setting

in Beatriz Guido's novel. However, the final scenario and the programme notes do not mention it. From the designs and the action in the first numbers of the ballet, it can be inferred that the space of the story is permeated with a hot, suffocating weather (a 'hothouse' atmosphere, according to the scenario) and is ruled by strict repressive values in relation to sex.

The tropical ambience is chiefly suggested by the most abstract elements of Nicholas Georgiadis' designs for the set and costumes. The backcloths for the garden scenes at the beginning of the ballet are painted in a tachist style, with a predominance of bright colours, especially light green. They are not decorated with exact, clear lines but a few outlines that suggest exuberant trees and potted palms (Georgiadis E., 2004: 27). They evoke, rather than realistically represent, the abundant burgeoning flora that grows in climates of heat and humidity. The dominant colours in the costumes for children are likewise light (green, yellow and blue), in a tonal range that Georgiadis himself described as *fauve*, its vividness recalling the brightness of a luminous and exotic place (Georgiadis quoted in Georgiadis E., 2004: 23). The sheer texture of the fabrics used for the sets and for the female costumes also help to suggest a hot space. The latter were made of chiffons and lightweight fabrics whereas the former were painted on gauzes (Woodcock, 2002a: 107). The few pieces of furniture in the set matched this filmy quality. They are made of cane, a material associated to tropical settings.

The values ruling this sultry location are introduced by a kinetic cue, a gesture of the Mother in the first number of the ballet. With an energetic arm movement, preceded by a severe look of disapproval, she orders her two eldest daughters to cover the nude statutes in the garden. She considers that their nakedness is not

appropriate for her youngest child's eyes (the Girl) and it might also offend the guests expected for the party in the evening. The Mother's commanding gesture unfolds the rigid values of the household, lending a symbolic significance of reproach to the statues in the garden. Their covered white presence in the space where the children will play in the following numbers will recall the atmosphere of sexual repression dominating the place. Even when the children, in their games, uncover them to mock the Girl's innocence, their colourless cold marble appearance will preserve a symbolic air of severity, contrasting with the colourful and lively spirit of the youngsters.

Within this general location, the events of the story take place in four different spaces: the garden, the house, outside the house and a hidden place in the garden. Not only does this spatial distribution help to structure the five scenes of the ballet, but also to provide different thematic and stylistic connotations to each area, as it is discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **5.2.2 The Garden**

The garden is in *The Invitation* children's territory. The first five numbers that take place there (No. 1 to No. 5) reflect, directly or by contrast, the lively nature of the youngest characters of the story. Paradoxically, the first characters to be introduced in this space in length<sup>3</sup> are adults (the Mother and her two eldest daughters, the Girl's Sisters). Their actions help to establish the ideological features symbolically attached to this space. The Mother and the two Sisters enter the garden together in the opening number of the ballet, the Mother holding firmly her daughters' arms in a gesture of control that she maintains during the trio that they dance here. On several occasions the siblings try to escape from the maternal

restricting hands but all attempts to walk free are promptly suppressed by the Mother. This contest between the younger generation's tendency to run freely in the garden and the Mother's efforts to repress it is symbolically conveyed through the upward projections in the choreography for the Sisters' arms. Their *arabesques* and repeated movements raising their arms are always aborted in the last moments by the Mother, who uses her commanding hand either to firmly hold the wrist of their lower arm or to disdainfully lower their raised arms. In both cases, the gesture is a sign of taming the free nature of youngsters (see Picture 7 in Appendix 1).

The imposing presence of the Mother in the garden is also reinforced by several signs of obedience that the Sisters display in their dancing. In a sequence of quick steps *en pointe* they imply that they are dutifully behaving according to their Mother's rules. More clearly, they bow to her twice in a gesture of filial submission. And spatially, they never choose their floor patterns, they just follow those marked by the Mother, not only when they dance under her commanding arms but also on the one occasion when she sets them free. The only movement they perform at liberty is travelling in a big circle around the Mother, always facing her, as if the action emanates from her and is under her iron control.

The introductory actions performed in the garden by the Mother and the two Sisters lend the space a first association with child freedom, even if it is through the attempts of the Mother to suppress it. The connotation is immediately confirmed and established in positive terms by the events in the following numbers. After the female trio, the next character to enter the garden is the Girl, followed by the Boy not much later. In the absence of her Mother, they take

possession of the space without any restrictions. The choreography that they dance is full of spatial, dynamic and energy markers of the childhood nature that finds full expression in the outdoors space of the garden. Widely outstretched arms, zigzag wandering movements around the stage contrast with the aborted motions of the two elder Sisters.

When the rest of the children arrive, after the Boy/Girl *pas de deux*, they confirm with their games that the space of the garden is in the ballet the topography for childhood. Both the music and the movement qualities retain the features of vitality and playfulness introduced by the Girl. The main musical theme in the number is lively and bouncy, especially when the Children erupt on the stage. The light-heartedness of the tune contrasts with the languid and mysterious melody of the initial number, dominated by the Mother (see Musical Example 4 in Appendix 2). The Children's movements are expansive, with limbs generously projected into the space and into the floor. They use all the available space, taking full possession of the garden, not only by moving freely around it but also by incorporating all the props, the statues, in their games. They touch them, hide behind them and play with their covers. The carefree liveliness that dominates the choreography of this ensemble, with circular, messy floor patterns and wide, ample movements, might have been inspired by Spanish paintings like Francisco de Goya's *La gallina ciega* (1788) (See Picture 8 and Picture 9 in Appendix 1). In the first version of the scenario, at the beginning of scene one, MacMillan wrote: 'see possible Spanish 19<sup>th</sup> century pictures for children's games' (MacMillan et al., 1960). MacMillan's choreography shares many features of Goya's painting: an outdoor setting, a dynamic quality in the bodies, and a composition that arranges the figures with spaciousness. The inspiration by the pictorial traits of Goya's painting is a strategy

which MacMillan probably learnt from Ninette de Valois, as I will explain later, and which he considerably developed later in his career. One of the most vivid examples is *Requiem* (1976), based on William Blake's drawings, paintings and illustrations, particularly those for Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Dante's *Inferno* and the Old Testament book of Job (Parry, 2009: 462).

The connotations of liveliness, unequivocally imbued in the garden after the children's games in No. 3, are exploited to mark the introduction of the adults in the following number (No. 4). It is significant that the first appearance of the group of characters that thematically and structurally contrasts with the group of children just introduced takes place in the garden, the kingdom of childhood. The opposing features and values of both groups arise with clarity from the contrast between the actions of the arriving group and the symbolic connotations attached to the space where they take place. The entrance of the adults in the story is anticipated by the interruption of the Children's games by the Governess. She erases any trace of unruly behaviour in order to prepare them to welcome their parents. In contrast with the circular and messy formations in which the Children have been playing, she arranges them in a straight line at the right of the stage, imposing stillness in addition. Her action represents thus an intrusion in their world, so bustling until her arrival. Her presence in the garden possesses similar connotations to the Mother's at the beginning of the ballet. She enters the place to impose adult rules, anticipating the manners of the arriving guests.

The outline of the group of Adults in its first appearance in the ballet builds upon these features of order and formality. In contrast with the way the Children have entered in the garden in the previous number (randomly, with disorder and from

many different points of the stage), the Adults enter in an orderly way and only from two points at the front of the stage. The way they take possession of the place is also very different: they do not jump or run but just walk. In addition, their arrival slows down the music, which loses the playfulness that was dominant during the Children's games and replaces it with an air of gravity. The costumes of the adults reflect a more severe stance too. The colours have the same tonal range as the Children's but they are generally darker. Both men and women wear hats and coats, and the women's dresses are longer than the girls', covering most of their bodies, from neck to toes. They impose a look of restraint in the adult female characters contrasting with the freer appearance of the knee-length dresses with short sleeves of the younger generation.

### **5.2.3 The House**

After the dance numbers in the garden, the action of the ballet moves to a different spatial frame, the house. If the garden embraced childhood values, the imposing house will host adulthood mores. The design keeps the continuity with the previous location, since the windows and balconies painted in the backcloth allow the abundant flora of the garden to be seen in the background. Symbolically, the communication between the two spaces suggests the transition from infancy into maturity. In the room, a pair of statues on both sides of the stage, at the front, recall the action of the Mother in the garden, instantly transferring to this space the symbolical meaning they acquired earlier in the ballet. The decoration of the interior of the house is completed with a second subtle reference to adult behaviour. Two cane chairs placed at the back of the stage remind the (static) card

games played by the Mother before the frisky children made their entrance in the story (See Picture 10 in Appendix 1).

The house is introduced in the stiff *pas de deux* between the married couple in No. 6 and is maintained afterwards as the setting for the long scene with the dancing lesson and the beginning of the ball (No. 7 to 10). The group scene, rather than the private duet, exposes the rules governing this second space of the story. The choreography for the ensemble of children builds upon the solemnity of social conventions that was introduced in the arrival of the guests. Although the Children are still the main participants of this event, they do not behave as the spontaneous kids they were in the garden but as the young adults they are in the process of becoming in the story. Their movements during the lesson do not have the disorderly shape of their previous games but the codified form of the steps of the polka, the galop and the waltz. Though the choreography is not a faithful reproduction of these dances but a stylized recreation of them, the ballroom embrace is always maintained. This basic position organizes the Children in couples, away from the group camaraderie they have exhibited in the garden.

The floor patterns and the formations keep the pattern of straight lines imposed earlier by the arrival of adults. In their dance, the couples of Children hardly form any circular patterns, as if the only way to inhabit this space is to follow the neat linear paths already carefully set for them. The right angles and codified steps that dominate their movements around the room differ from the freedom they have previously enjoyed. These social dances are the entertainment alternative that the social conventions in the adult world provide to the games in the garden. The



Children's lack of real interest in the class is stressed by the farcical tone of the music.

To mark the command of the adults in the house, the Children are never alone in this space. There is always a watchful adult keeping an eye on their behaviour and marking directions and corrections. At first, it is merely the Governess, the Husband and Wife but the rest of the guests progressively join the reunion in the room. They take their place surrounding the dance floor, reinforcing their role as the adult social environment that embraces the world of the youngsters.

#### **5.2.4 Outside the House**

The childhood/adulthood contrast which supports the story of sexual initiation of the ballet, and which is spatially reflected in the opposition between the outdoors garden and the indoors house, is developed further in the third spatial frame of the ballet, 'outside the house'. A place that is in-between the garden and the house, it will host two liminal events, the Carnival representation and the first sexual experience of the Boy.

The story within the story presented by the troupe of Carnival artists, which introduces new sexual values in the story, takes place right in front of the house, not inside it. The solid, permanent walls in the background of this spatial location are a reminder of the robust rigid values dominating the place. The values brought from the world outside stay on the border; they do not penetrate further. The balconies and windows overlooking the terrace are thresholds communicating the two spaces but their lines, precisely delineated against the more abstract design of the rest of the backcloth, confer on them a solid architectural quality that makes

them look like watching eyes observing the events rather than routes facilitating any transit (See Picture 11 in Appendix 1).

In addition to the Carnival representation, the passage from boyhood to adulthood experienced by the Boy also takes place in this borderline space. Neither of the two participants in the encounter is in what, this far, has been their natural habit. The Boy is not in the garden, where he feels at ease, and the Wife abandons the house, where she is a guest. They meet in a mid-point place, making their journey easier. In addition, the place they choose has just been covered by the libertine values that can accept their behaviour. The Wife is married and far older than the Boy, so their action represents a scandalous transgression of the values endorsed by the household. It matches, however, the values brought by the troupe to the margins of the house. The first of the seductions in the ballet and the miniature dance thus share not only the space in which they take place but also a transgressive spirit.

#### **5.2.5 A Hidden Place in the Garden**

The sexual encounter between the Girl and the Husband has very different connotations. It involves adultery and the participation of a minor but, additionally, encompasses the brutal use of violence. It therefore fits neither with the prevalent values of the house nor with the temporal festive mores displayed on the terrace. Its illicit nature is disclosed in a place away from the house and its surroundings. The fourth space of the ballet is a dark, hidden place in the garden.

The backcloth depicting this distant site reveals a deep blue sky with a white moon in the distance, behind a black tangled mess of tree branches in the forefront. There is no reminder of the house, not a trace of the ubiquitous statues. The rape takes place in the wildest spot in the garden, away from civilization, as if no social

convention can endorse this type of behaviour. The space has an air of sobriety, with the Girl dressed in a light blue nightdress, and an air of mystery, with an unsettling quietness coming from the music. The sinister event erupts with sharp ferocity and no witness (See Picture 3 in Appendix 1).

To recapitulate, the spatial evolution of the action across four different spatial frames connects both with the temporal transition across the different stages of the day and with the core premise of the ballet, the transition from childhood to adulthood experienced by two adolescents. The childhood/adulthood/passage pattern underlying the story is reflected in the garden/house/outside contrast in the spatial dimension and in the morning/afternoon/evening chain in the temporal dimension. The liminality of the space outside the house, where the carnival troupe encourages a transgressive and liminal experience and the Boy has his first sexual encounter, matches with the liminality of the time of the day when it occurs, sunset. The rape of the Girl adds a disturbance to this pattern both in spatial and temporal terms: it happens in a hidden place and at night time.

### **5.3 'Discourse' Space**

The four spatial frames of the story and the symbolism progressively imbued in them provide the instances of space thematization and spatial imagery just discussed. The category of space, however, allows for a second perspective on the spatial dimension of the narrative. The notion of 'discourse' space, introduced earlier, helps to scrutinize the narrative strategies that exploit the nature of dance as a narrative medium that unfolds the story spatially in three dimensions. I will

concentrate here on three different examples, each taking advantage of the three dimensionality of the space in a different way. In the first one, the three dimensions of the stage allow for the simultaneous presentation of multiple actions while directing the focus of narrative interest to only one. In the second instance, the dancers are arranged in a quasi-*tableaux vivant* manner that approaches the type of narration as that of two-dimensional media such as painting. In the third example, the choreographic space is symbolised for narrative purposes.

### **5.3.1 Multiple Actions Onstage**

The relationship that structures the main plotline of the ballet, the Girl/Husband's, stresses the first events in the affair with this spatial approach at the 'discourse' level. The first meeting between them is embedded within the greeting actions performed by the rest of the characters on stage in No. 4, which is arranged spatially to allow a background of action at the back and right side of the stage, on the one hand, and a central focus of attention at the top, left, on the other. The strategy is later used again in the general scene in No. 9, which creates the narrative interest for a crucial event in their story, their waltz in No. 10. The manipulation of 'discourse' space in No. 9 is achieved by a combination of kinetic, aural and visual elements that shows that this strategy involves more than the mere spatial distribution of the dancers across different parts of the stage. A deeper analysis of the scene helps to flesh out this complexity.

After the Girl's solo in No. 8, where the Husband and Girl's flirtation is overt, noticed by the rest of the characters and the only action in the number<sup>4</sup>, the interaction between Husband and Girl in No. 9 is, by contrast, one among the three

actions simultaneously taking place on stage. On the right-hand side, towards the back, the children, in couples, dance a social dance under the Governess' watchful eye. Still at the back of the stage but towards the right-centre, the adult guests arrive in pairs. They walk in diagonal towards the left, top corner, where the Wife, who welcomes them, is initially placed. After briefly greeting her, they congregate at the back, on the left-hand side. Husband and Girl occupy the space downstage that is left free by the two groups. The Girl, on the right, is illuminated by a bright spotlight. The Husband, a few meters away, stares at her. Their dominance over the rest of the characters in attracting the main narrative interest is emphasized not only by their spatial location downstage and the selective lighting highlighting the Girl's position but also by other markers.

The music is a key cue, for it selectively refers to the interaction between Girl and Husband. Significantly, it is not the diegetic music of the ball (it is not the music the children are dancing to) but non-diegetic music whose dominant melody, the heavy and potent 'sinister' melody, allies with a few kinetic cues onstage to express what is going on between Husband and Girl. With eloquence and potency, this melody expresses the Husband's philandering intentions while he slowly walks towards the Girl, stares at her with intensity, and pauses to enjoy the view. Two additional tunes add some narrative information too. The Girl's hesitant stillness while the Husband stares at her (she has just finished her solo and is embarrassed by her audacity) is conveyed through a brief, nervous tune in the flute intertwined twice with the main melody. The second short addition to the main melody appears when the Wife momentarily abandons the rest of the guests and tries twice to stop her Husband. The music incorporates this brief intrusion into the Husband/Girl's space on the stage with a few notes that denote the Wife's

concerns. This reference to the Wife in the music at the precise moment when she briefly interrupts the action between Husband and Girl reinforces the correspondence between the score and only one of the three spatial locations on stage.

The aural selective focus on one of three actions matches the kinaesthetic emphasis that arises from the contrasting differences among them. While there is constant movement in the dancing steps of the children and in the gradual arrival of the guests, stillness and unhurried gestures are the chief elements in the choreography for the central couple. The Girl stays on the same spot, anxiously moving her feet. Only at the end does she timidly move while the Husband raises her head, holds her hand and takes her to the centre of the stage to begin their duet in No. 10. Before that moment, the Husband has been almost as kinetically passive as the Girl. Without performing any dancing, he simply walks in her direction, pauses to gaze at her, again advances forwards and, finally, deliberately stops at her side, giving her time to get used to his close presence. All these movements are performed at a measured slow pace and with deliberately long and intense glances. In contrast with the two dynamic crowds of adults and children, the almost static Husband and Girl concentrate most of the narrative attention through their highly expressive stillness. Surrounded by the rest of the characters, they make important progress in their affair.

The combination of spatial, visual, musical and kinetic cues that shifts the narrative attention away from the general action of the scene and directs it towards the specific actions performed by two characters is a spatial strategy that is similar to a zoom in or a progression from a long shot to a medium shot<sup>5</sup> in a film. MacMillan

was an avid film-goer (Seymour et al., 1984: 60 and 75) and a cinematic quality in his choreography was noticed by the critics early on in his career (Barnes et al., 1961: 11). He might have found inspiration for this particular scene in the film *La casa del ángel*, as I will discuss in chapter six, but many other examples of this spatial technique can be found in his repertory. The instance that perhaps possesses more clarity and more dramatic power comes from his 1965 rendering of the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. The two protagonists of this ballet meet during a ball in Juliet's house, a bustling group scene where the simultaneous presentation of the general action and the private encounter will visually allow the emphasis on the relevance of the patriarchal society over the love story. At the beginning of the scene, the opening dance of the ball depicts the commanding power that men have over women in the Capulet family and society. At the end of the scene, after Romeo and Juliet have met surrounded by the dancing crowd, the rest of the dancing couples progressively separate the lovers, who end the number in opposite places of the stage. In between them, the space is occupied by the members of the social milieu thus metaphorically advancing the end of the story: the pressures of the patriarchal society will separate Romeo and Juliet, preventing their love story to prosper.

### **5.3.2 Slow-Paced Tableau Vivant – Recapitulation of the Story**

The three-dimensionality of the space onstage, which the scene in No. 9 exploits to present several simultaneous actions onstage while driving the attention to the Husband/Girl interaction, is the source of a spatial strategy that creates the opposite effect in No. 16. Rather than taking advantage of the three-dimensions of the stage, it seems to cancel them, approaching the type of narration to that of two-

dimensional media. *The Invitation* contains several instances of this spatial option, which has the shape of a *tableau vivant* and, generally, a recapitulative purpose. The immediate aftermath of the rape, with the two inert bodies lying on the ground for a distressing pause, is an example that I have already discussed. I will concentrate here on the last number of the ballet, when the four central characters meet for the last time.

In that final, brief confrontation of the four protagonists<sup>6</sup>, the spatial composition of the scene, together with the suspension of discourse time that slows down the pace of the narration, allows for a pictorial and aural recapitulation of the story. The visual composition of the *tableau* arranges the four characters in three places of the stage. The Girl is downstage right; the Boy, upstage left; and in between them, the married couple, adopting the pose of the marital cold perfection they have repeatedly used to present themselves in public across the ballet. They keep the pose for a few seconds before they unhurriedly walk towards the front of the stage, cast down and exit<sup>7</sup>. The two cousins observe this deliberate exhibition of calm in appalled stillness. Meanwhile, the music recapitulates their story with several leitmotifs from earlier events or situations in the ballet, such as the sweet melody to which the two cousins lively, tenderly, and innocently danced together in the garden at the beginning of the ballet. As this melody enters, the disruption that the married couple has produced to that youthful promise visually emerges from the stage. The intervention of the married couple, in the middle of the stage, has destroyed the bond between the cousins, placing them far apart, one at the left, and the other at the right of the stage. The tentative and incipient relationship they had at the beginning of the ballet has been destroyed by the disruptive intervention of the older couple.



The incorporation of *tableaux vivants* or *quasi-tableaux vivants* as a narrative device that brings storytelling through dance closer to painting is a choreographic practice which Anthony Tudor used with certain regularity (*Lilac Garden* -1936- contains one of the most famous instances in dance history) but which MacMillan most probably inherited from Ninette de Valois. Dance scholar Helena Hammond (2012) has stressed the significance of visual culture, and painting in particular, in de Valois' artistic formation and in her subsequent artistic directorship of the Royal Ballet. Hammond suggests that this influence comes from her bond to the Bloomsbury Group during the 1930s and is more visible in her ballets inspired by paintings, such as *Job* (1931), based on drawings by William Blake, and *The Rake's Progress* (1935), inspired by William Hogarth's pictorial series. Dance critic Arnold Haskell noticed how in this ballet de Valois succeeded not merely in creating compositions clearly recognizable as coming from Hogarth, but 'in creating thousands of other pictures, each lasting for a fraction of a second that Hogarth himself might have composed' (quoted in Hammond, 2012: 185). De Valois must have passed this choreographic approach on to MacMillan early on in her mentoring of the choreographer, since MacMillan seems to have already absorbed the practice in *The Invitation*. The instances of *tableaux vivants* in the ballet, his comment to Lynn Seymour that he wanted her to look as if she had stepped out of a painting by Renoir (Seymour et al., 1984: 133), and his note in the scenario to research Spanish painters to inspire his choreography for the games of the Children provide evidence in this sense. After *The Invitation*, MacMillan frequently used painting as a spur for his creativity (*Requiem*) and the spatial strategy of *tableaux vivants*, in particular, became an important choreographic device until the end of his career. His last ballet, *The Judas Tree* (1992), for instance, finishes with a

pictorial recapitulation of the story similar to the last confrontation of characters in *The Invitation*. After the suicide of the main character of the story, the Foreman, his body remains, motionless, hanging upstage; his Friend (whom he betrayed) lies lifeless in an abandoned car below; and the Woman (gang-raped and murdered earlier in the ballet) reappears with a white sheet in her arms. Standing upstage, Pietà-like in her upper body, her silent silhouette completes the enduring final picture of the ballet. Corollary of the brutal violence displayed before, the image of dead bodies is maintained for some seconds before the curtains are brought down. The pictorial summary of the story leaves an intense impact on the audience.

### **5.3.3 Symbolization of Choreographic Space - Up/Down Contrast**

As part of the contribution that the 'discourse' space can make to the configuration of a narrative, the choreographic space can be exploited to confer symbolical expressivity to the movements of the dancers as they unfold in the space. In *The Invitation*, the duet between the Wife and the Boy in No. 13 (which narrates the consummation of their attraction) provides two instances where the contrast between floor and sky levels in the choreographic space can be understood in figurative terms. Two UP-DOWN metaphors might be detected in the choreography. The first one is the metaphor SEXUAL SATISFACTION IS UP; LACK OF SEXUAL SATISFACTION IS DOWN that is recurrently presented across the ballet through the erotic lifts embedded in the choreography of the duets, as highlighted earlier. The *pas de deux* of the Boy and the Wife epitomizes this metaphor. The duet is lift-dominated, with the body of the Wife projected as far up as possible, as if the climax is symbolically situated there. Most of the erotic

advances and peaks are expressed through elevations in the air, while the sexual peak is achieved when the Wife is held up by the Boy in a supported lift.

In the second metaphor, the floor level (DOWN) is the site for the Boy's vulnerability and his lack of sexual experience, while a more elevated level suggests the Wife's command and maturity. In this SEXUAL COMMAND IS UP; SEXUAL INSECURITY IS DOWN metaphor, the Boy seeks refuge DOWN in a kneeling, foetal position in his last hesitant moment before the last sequence of lifts. In the preceding step, the Wife has unfolded her body for him in an open position that suggests an unequivocal invitation to take it and that also exposes her more authoritative voice in the relationship (see Picture 32 in Appendix 1). With her, exuberant, *en pointe* (UP), and him, in awe, on the floor (DOWN), the difference in maturity and confidence emerges from the UP-DOWN spatial contrast. Placed on the floor, the Boy feels overwhelmed by the Wife and the repertory of sexual sensations she is opening up for him. As if doubtful about how to absorb the experience up there, he folds himself and shelters on the ground. In a new sign of initiative, the Wife goes down to him, caresses his hair and tenderly embraces him placing her body on his back. Encouraged, the Boy gets up and supports her in a new lift.

The spatial imagery built upon the UP-DOWN metaphorical projections of the VERTICALITY schema is a narrative strategy that MacMillan would later use frequently in his choreography. The balcony *pas de deux* in *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) is possibly the instance that is better known and is closer in time to *The Invitation*. *Manon* (1974), however, sustains the strategy in a much more decisive way across the whole ballet, with an air-orientated choreography for the lustful and exuberant

Manon in act two and an earth-bound choreography for the exiled, dying Manon in act three.

## 5.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, the examination of the spatial dimension of the 'discourse' level of the narrative has provided some valuable insights into several narrative strategies used by MacMillan in the ballet. The symbolical connotations of the spatial up/down contrast, just discussed, together with the suspenseful multi-action scene in No. 9 and the recapitulative quasi-*tableau vivant* in the closing number illustrate three different aspects of the spatial configuration of the narrative. The analysis has stressed how, in the two latter, the spatial strategies approach the mode of narration to that of other media. In the multi-action scene, the isolation of a point of narrative focus within a wider context is similar to a zoom-in or a change to a shorter shot in film technique. In the *tableaux vivants*, the spatial composition brings dance close to painting. In both cases, MacMillan combines his choices for the 'discourse' space with a suspension of the 'discourse' time, either in the main action within the multiple simultaneously represented or in the only one staged in the *tableaux*. In these instances, stillness or slow motion favours the perception of the narrative information conveyed by the spatial composition. Furthermore, the correlation between the spatial and temporal strategies at the 'discourse' level follows a similar tendency at the 'story' level, where, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, the spatial frames where the story takes place (the garden, the house, outside the house, a hidden place in the garden) parallel the temporal

division of the day in which the events happen (morning, afternoon, evening, night).

The study of the space of the story has also focused on the thematization of the four spaces, fleshing out the contribution of choreography, music and design to the configuration of values and thematic significance invested in each area. Again a pictorial basis (Goya) has been suggested as the source of inspiration for the choreography. All the examples analysed in that section as well as the instances illustrating the arguments in the rest of this chapter have revealed spatial strategies that MacMillan reprised later in his career. It can therefore be concluded that the spatial treatment of the narrative in this ballet anticipates better known examples in MacMillan's repertory, such as *Requiem*, *Manon*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Judas Tree*.

## CHAPTER 6: NARRATION AND EMPLOTMENT OF THE FOUR RELATIONSHIPS: THE *PAS DE DEUX*

### 6.1 Introduction

After the study of the spatio-temporal dimensions of the narrative in chapters four and five, this chapter resumes the discussion on plot issues initiated in chapter three. It looks at the plot of *The Invitation* in more detail, focusing on the four relationships that form the core of the ballet. In addition, it directly tackles issues of the process of narration, revealing narrative strategies related to how the story is conveyed by the choreography and the rest of the stage elements. Since the four relationships in the ballet (the Girl and the Boy's, the Husband and the Wife's, the Wife and the Boy's, and the Husband and the Girl's) are mainly delineated through duets, the study of their emplotment<sup>1</sup> and narration allows for an investigation of the *pas de deux*, Kenneth MacMillan's favourite and, for him, most expressive dance format. According to dancer Lynn Seymour, the *pas de deux* was MacMillan's starting point in the creation of every new ballet (Seymour, 1984: 250), and, as he declared in an interview of the time, it was with *The Invitation* that he became aware of its potential for narrative purposes (in Brinson, 1960a: 9). The scrutiny, in this chapter, of the *pas de deux* in *The Invitation* will therefore engage with this important choreographic form in MacMillan's storytelling.

Although the four sections of the chapter combine comments on the plot and on the 'discourse' level, the first two tend to place more emphasis on the latter while the last two focus with more insistence on the former. Section 6.2 starts the chapter with the study of Girl and Boy's relation, concentrating on the imagery of the choreography and the events in the plot in order to expose how both aspects

are heavily influenced by Colette. Section 6.3 discusses the Wife and Husband's relationship, analysing the general traits of the choreography and the signature step of the couple. It also uses its central *pas de deux* to illustrate a narrative strategy which is in fact dominant in the whole ballet, the continuity among the four relationships through common elements in the choreography. Sections 6.4 and 6.5 consider the mutual plot interdependence between the Wife and Boy's relationship and the Husband and Girl's. Whereas the impact of the latter allows for a succinct emplotment and narration of the former, as will be discussed in section 6.4, the influence of the Wife/Boy's relation on the Husband/Girl's helps to build the suspense that leads into the denouement of the story, as it will be fleshed out in section 6.5. In both cases, the choreography draws significantly from the original sources of the stories, Colette in the case of *The Wife/Boy* affair and Torre Nilsson's film in the case of the *Husband/Girl*.

## **6.2 The Girl and the Boy**

The relationship between the two young protagonists of the ballet is narrated in three different dance numbers. Nos. 2 and 5 (in scene one) shape the relationship between the Girl and the Boy as a tender blend of childhood camaraderie and innocent first love. No. 16 puts an end to this bond, as a corollary of the tragic events in the story. The description, in Nos. 2 and 5, of the type of relationship that exists between the two cousins is strongly inspired in the first episodes of Colette's *Le Blé en herbe* (1923), where Phil and Vinca experience the transformation of their childhood friendship into an adolescent attraction. MacMillan transfers some of the events of those initial passages of Colette's novella to the plot of *The*

*Invitation.* More visibly, he translates some gestures and imagery in Colette's text into the choreography for his two youngsters.

### ***Inspiration from Colette***

Plot-wise, Colette structures the crucial moment of change that her young lovers are experiencing through several events whose different nature gives evidence of the evolving bond between the two characters. The activities of fishing and swimming, on one hand, allow Phil (who is sixteen) and Vinca (fifteen) to still behave as the game companions they have been during the past summers. While they fish or swim, they still give evidence of their childhood nature, playing, laughing or just staying silent together, without any feeling of embarrassment or discomfort. By contrast, on the other hand, their chats in the beach, at first, and, later, in the cliff, show the emergence a different, more mature intimacy between them. It is significant that, in the chain of events in the plot, these two conversations are the consequence of two quarrels provoked by the intervention of the adults. On the first occasion, Phil becomes jealous when a visitor in their parents' house complements Vinca for her beauty (1980: 69). On the second, the roles are reversed and it is Vinca who gets angry when she witnesses Phil and Mme. Dalleray's first meeting (1980: 77). Both quarrels lead to the mature chats that reconcile the youngsters and show the incipient feeling of love springing up between them.

Narratively, in Colette's account of these four events (the two childish games and the two adult conversations), the body plays an important role in showing the slow evolution of the relationship from friendship to courtship. The awakening of new sensations in Phil and Vinca and the awareness of a new way of relating to one



another arises, in Colette's text, from a sensual description of a few body gestures. A first physical indication that the childhood friendship is transforming into something different happens during the episode of fishing. As they search for the best place to fish,

[Phil] offered his hand to help her to swerve round the rough gullies and Vinca instantly blushed. That new gesture, that new look had been enough to puzzle her. Yesterday, they scoured the cliffs, explored the rocks side by side –each at their risk ... As agile as him, she did not remember ever requesting Phil's help... She rejected his hand with too big an angular gesture<sup>2</sup>.

(1980: 66)

Phil's gesture of gallantry, offering Vinca his hand as if she was a dame, is the first sign of change in his rapport with her. As Vinca ponders, it contrasts with the freedom and camaraderie that they have always enjoyed in their games, where there has never been a similar bodily contact. Although they have touched each other's bodies, it was with a different intention, merely to amuse themselves ('Phil grabbed Vinca's foot and pulled her under the wave... [both] laughing' -1980: 68-). The usual way for them to swim and to walk together is 'side by side', with no contact (1980: 66 and 68). Phil's hand bridges this gap between the two bodies for the first time in this incident, initiating thus the set of gestures that will finally erase that brotherly distance.

The next event that brings their bodies closer again happens at the end of their conversation in the beach. After they have shared their respective plans and hopes for the future, the bodily contact becomes more intimate, conscious and welcome by the two characters.

He rested his head in the skirt of his childhood friend. Her fine knees quivered and tightened, and Phil daydreamed about the charming shape of these knees with a sudden ardour. But he closed his eyes,

gave away the confident weight of his head and lingered there,  
waiting...

(1980: 74)

This tender embrace anticipates the event in the cliff where the physical closeness reaches the highest peak in these initial passages of the novella. Gliding from his embrace, Vinca deliberately leans over the cliff, forcing Phil to seize her firmly by the waist to prevent her fall. With her body in his arms, he notices ‘the alive, elastic reality, the vigorous perfection of this body of a young woman’ (1980: 82). He is also aware of the power of his arms, enough to decide their future, so close to death on the brink of the cliff. Vinca is even more perceptive about the physical and emotional implications of this situation of risk. Her deliberate movement leaning over the cliff, putting her life in Phil’s hands, seeks not only Phil’s tight embrace but also his affective response. She is testing the depth and the nature of his feelings. For the first time, their relationship is clearly recognizable as adolescent love.

In the ballet, MacMillan borrows these two aspects of Colette’s novella, the structure of the events through a pattern of progressive transformation and the prominence of some body gestures in the narration, for the portrayal of the initial bond between the Boy and the Girl. Like the episodes of fishing and swimming in *Le blé*, the initial *pas de deux* in No. 2 stresses the childhood friendship between the two characters while introducing the first signs of a physical attraction. By contrast, the duet in No. 5, roughly equivalent to Phil and Vinca’s chats on the beach and the cliff, focuses on that first manifestation of love. As in the literary antecedent, the physical and emotional approach is preceded by a quarrel in the plot. The dance number immediately before the second *pas de deux* encapsulates the two episodes of jealousy from the novella into one single occasion of friction.

The introduction of the married couple provokes a quarrel between the Boy and the Girl, both resentful of the interest his/her cousin has shown for the Husband or the Wife, respectively. Following the pattern of Colette's plot, in the ballet, too, the interference of adults is a catalyst for the argument between the adolescents that leads into their reconciliation and into the evolution of their relation towards a more mature stage.

Along with these plot borrowings, the body gestures and movements that lead the narration in Colette's novel also have a prominent significance in MacMillan's choreography for these two *pas de deux*. He directly incorporates many of them into his dance sequences (like some hand gestures and embraces, and the games 'side by side') but he goes beyond a literal translation. He reworks the body imagery, reinforcing its impact, and develops additional gestures and movements that complement or expand its denotative power. As a consequence, both duets contain dance passages where Colette's imprint is evident not only in the gestures that come directly from her descriptions but also in others that, coming exclusively from MacMillan, have a similar tenor. Under the façade of a physical gesture, they convey important emotional nuances. A close choreographic analysis of the two *pas de deux* fleshes out these key kinetic and gestural components of the narration of the relationship between the two youngest characters in the story.

### ***Pas de Deux in No. 2***

The first *pas de deux* starts with a gesture of the Boy whose intention and impact recalls Phil's reaction when he offered Vinca his hand to help her to cross the rocks in *Le blé*. When the Girl makes a spin followed by a graceful movement as if falling to the floor, the Boy seizes her, preventing her landing in the last instant (See

Picture 12 in Appendix 1). Like Vinca, the Girl is startled by this unexpected help and, as she is raised, she looks at the Boy in astonishment. He then tries to ease her puzzlement by seizing her hand, a gesture that she refuses to accept and transforms in a support for a playful rotation around him. On finishing it, the Girl again ventures with a falling movement that needs the assistance of the Boy, who gently grants it. As if this second occasion has confirmed her initial impressions that something new and different has happened between them, she confronts his eyes and he corroborates his intentions by moving his head towards her heart (See Picture 13 in Appendix 1). He repeats this gesture three times (which the Girl thrice refuses) and finally reinforces it with a hand hold that she firmly rejects, putting an end to this initial sequence. The Boy's support, hand and head gestures in these opening phrases are the first signs of a new rapport between the two youngsters. Like Phil's hand in Colette's novella, they announce the beginning of a romance although, in the ballet, the new physical contact has three shapes (rather than one) and the emotional implication is clearer thanks to the advances that the Boy makes with his head towards her heart. The music too contributes to delineate the birth of the love affair. It does not stress any of these exploratory gestures but, crucially, contradicts the Girl's cancellation of the Boy's hand gesture. When she transforms his hold into a support for a child-like circle around him, the music rises in dynamics and in orchestration and plays a hopeful and lyrical tune that, contrary to the Girl's movement, suggests a romantic horizon for the two cousins (See Musical Example 5 in Appendix 2).

After these tentative gestures opening the duet, the narration moves on to depict the long childhood friendship that bonds the Boy and the Girl. As if the unexpected disagreement has troubled them enough for that morning, they resort to the well-

known territory of their childhood games. Like Phil and Vinca's daily swim, these games are 'a silent and complete joy [that] provide their difficult age with peace and childhood' (Colette, 1980: 68). To convey these qualities, the music for this truce is playful and bouncy, and the choreography is infused with carefree, joyful and relaxed traits. The dancers' legs and, especially, arms perform incoherent, spontaneous and funny shapes that seem to spring from the imaginative mind of a child, at large in the playground. In a similar tenor, they insert small, amusingly punctuated, quick leaps and some simple spins and balances that they stress with a knowing look at each other, sharing a feeling of thrilling achievement. Their floor patterns are, similarly, consciously unruly. They seem improvised and free, cover an ample portion of the stage, and are performed in all directions.

In this sequence, the Boy and the Girl mostly dance in parallel, performing identical or similar steps, either simultaneously or alternately, with no supported choreography; they dance 'side by side', to use Colette's terms (See Picture 14 in Appendix 1). This friendly distance contrasts with the tentative attempts at contact in the opening steps of the duet, and chimes with the childhood camaraderie devoid of any physical attraction that this part of the number describes. This lack of intention in their contact is even maintained in the few instances where there is in fact contact between them. On one occasion, the Girl puts her friendly hand on the Boy's shoulder. In some phrases, they travel together, joined by their hands and, in a few spins and small lifts, the Boy supports the Girl (See Picture 15 in Appendix 1). This partnering is, however, infused with the same spirit of comradeship that governs the sequence and thus no expressive intention is given to the supporting hands. In addition, the lifts are very small, with the Girl's body only a few centimetres off the floor, as if the extra help does not add any special

value. On two occasions, the Girl's movement in the Boy's hands are reminiscent of a soft 'fish dive' but no acrobatic display is sought. Rather, it recalls Colette's description of Phil and Vinca's swimming movements during their daily swims in the sea.

Despite the independence that the 'side by side' movements grant to the two cousins, there is a recognizable connection between them that shows that they are, in fact, completely in tune. The steps that they perform possess similar patterns in dynamics, energy and shape (amusingly ungraceful), and the music reinforces the sense of unity by introducing the sequence with a polyphonic passage where the flute and the violin intermingle their different tunes in a harmonious way. When the Boy and the Girl dance in parallel and in unison with these combined melodies, their deep mutual understanding is revealed. The sense of harmony is additionally strengthened by the way the choreography and the music closely relate in the rest of the passage. Although the dance never imitates the music, it always plays with it, either punctuating a rhythmic pattern or a melodic stress, or anticipating or echoing a previous one. Like the spontaneous, funny shapes, jumps and balances of the characters, the music, too, is playful. In its own way, it sounds also child-like.

Although most of the *pas de deux* remains largely within the bounds of childhood friendship, MacMillan does not forget the transitional age of the characters and returns briefly to the theme of emerging love towards the end of the number. There are again several attempts at a kiss, another head movement of the Boy towards the Girl's heart and, more importantly, two loving embraces that convey a tender intimacy between the characters. The first one does not last long, although it is preceded by a sustained adoring look and is underlined by the same romantic

musical climax that announced the birth of their love earlier. Near the end, the Boy, in an impulse, kneels at the Girl's feet, embracing her legs and gazing up at her (see Picture 16 in Appendix 1). He tries to rest his head in her lap for a while, like Phil on Vinca's knees at the beach, but the Girl aborts the gesture and they resume their wanderings in the garden. The second embrace is the final position of the *pas de deux* and is again reminiscent of Colette's tender cuddles. The number closes with the Boy protectively cradling the Girl, who is sitting on the floor. Rather than an ardent hug, it is a sign of shared feelings, both characters happy and tired after their games together and just seeking rest. Yet, since this last embrace aligns with the cues of budding love scattered throughout the duet, it helps to round off the description of this first stage of their relationship with an indicative of the tenor of the next phase. The Boy and the Girl are experiencing a transformation similar to Phil and Vinca's: '[Vinca] had formed her tender and exclusive camaraderie with Phil through their children's games and sportive rivalry... Love was changing the essence of [that] tenderness' (Colette, 1980: 100). The next *pas de deux* between the young protagonists, in No. 5, shows this evolution.

### ***Pas de Deux in No. 5***

The duet starts with the quarrel provoked by the jealousy triggered by the arrival of the married couple. The opening steps have thus the same qualities as the quarrel in No. 2, with the Girl disdainfully rejecting any contact with the Boy. Even the few supports the Boy provides are intended to show the Girl's anger rather than the proximity of the two bodies. The tone of this rapport radically changes with the reconciliation. The floor pattern that initiates this appeasement is highly indicative of the physical approach that it is introducing. Mad at each other, the

Boy and the Girl have ended up at opposite sides of the stage. From that position, they remorsefully look at each, extend one longing arm towards the other and finally reunite at the centre of the stage. As if at the same time that they are covering the physical distance that is tearing them apart they are coming emotionally closer too, they embrace when they meet midpoint and start then to dance as a couple for the first time. The heart of the number is thus a supported *adagio*, not a 'side by side' dance. Significantly, on most of the occasions, the support from the Boy visibly involves the arms, not just the hands, so that he is clearly embracing the Girl during her movements, their two bodies touching, clinging tightly together. The full contact is especially evident in the steps that come from their first *pas de deux*, such as the walking steps, the balances on one leg or the Girl's turns ending in a falling *arabesque*. The respectful distance in the first occurrence of these steps is here transformed into an intimate closeness that shows that there is no longer a brotherly affection between the cousins but the fondness of two lovers. The sweet and innocent 'youthful' melody from No. 2 confirms this evolution. It now sounds deeper, led by the oboe and, subsequently, by the horns, rather than by the flute, as if it has matured by acquiring a lower pitch. And since the tune is tenderly supported by the strings, it provides a mellow atmosphere for the duet.

This new-found warmth between the Girl and the Boy retains, however, an important trait of the childhood friendship from where it emanates: the equality between the partners. Though the Boy is more adventurous and is usually the one who initiates movements, he never imposes one. The Girl shows initiative in allowing his advances and expanding his suggestions. Thus, for instance, although it is the Boy who warmly welcomes the Girl in his lap when they become



reconciled, it is the Girl who expresses her delight by resting her head on his shoulder and by raising her legs to waist level. Soon after, she allows him to rest his head on her back, no longer rejecting the tender gesture he has ventured several times with no success (See Picture 17 in Appendix 1). In addition, when they untie this first, long embrace, the Girl takes the position of the Boy, lovingly embracing him and resting her head on his back.

The sequence narrating these shared romantic feelings culminates with a long shoulder lift that resembles Colette's moment of intimacy for Phil and Vinca at the edge of the cliff (See Picture 18 in Appendix 1). The lift is a new step in the choreography and introduces a new physical possibility in the rapport between the Boy and the Girl. Neither the first *pas de deux* in No. 2 nor this *pas de deux* in No. 5 contains similar partnering coming from the Boy. When he has previously supported the Girl in some jumps and has assisted her in stopping her fallen trajectory to allow a held pose, the Girl's body has never reached a very high level. Her feet or hands have always remained in contact with the floor or at a small distance from it, never surpassing the height of her partner. In this shoulder lift, however, she takes off from the ground and remains up there, at a long distance from the safe ground, for a while. Expressively, the novelty of the lift in the choreography parallels the newness of the emotions for the characters. Together, they reach a higher level of affection.

The way in which the lift is performed denotes the tender qualities of this new addition to the Boy and Girl's repertory of gestures and embraces. Slowly, with a lot of care, the Boy kneels down and places the Girl on his shoulder. When he stands up, he cautiously moves around the stage, allowing the Girl in his arms to

explore the surroundings from this new, higher perspective. The Girl looks around with curiosity, as if she is discovering a new world, unknown to her until this moment. Meanwhile, the Boy performs quietly his key role in this awakening. She has the Girl's entire body in his arms. Her position up there is firmly maintained by the strength of his hold. He sustains it long enough to help the Girl unhurriedly enjoy the experience, and he is rewarded with an embrace when the Girl finally descends to the floor. The positions of the two bodies during the lift, the Girl enjoying a view from a level she would have never reached by herself, and the Boy in command of her body, propitiating that higher perspective, possess a close connection with the movement that Colette describes in the scene of the cliff. With Vinca leaning over the rocks and Phil firmly holding her, Colette's couple performs a bold but intimate embrace that shares the physical qualities of the shoulder lift of MacMillan's adolescents. In addition, similarly to its literary antecedent, in the ballet, too, the lift is placed at the end of a chain of gestures that develop a progressive closeness between the lovers, marking a peak in their relationship, and possesses a denotation that goes beyond the physicality of the movement. The specific expressivity embedded in the movement differs, however, from the episode in Colette's novella. Unlike the strong emotional implication in Phil and Vinca's story (where Vinca risks her own life to test the depth of Phil's feelings), the lift in the ballet only possess a subtle connotation of sexual nature whose significance is only hinted at here. In this number, the lift merely suggests that the Girl, thanks to the Boy's support, has done something that is exciting and new as well as tender and intimate, as the 'youthful melody' quietly played by the flute suggests when it stresses the Girl's sense of wonder while in the Boy's arms. The nuance of sexual connotation is not overtly evident here but will be clear in later

duets of the ballet, where lifts become a metaphor for sexual attraction and ecstasy.

After this special moment, things seem back to normal and the duet progresses towards its end through new attempts of the Boy's to obtain a kiss and a head caress from the Girl, who, as usual, refuses to grant them at first. However, as if the moment of intimacy has left a trace in her frame of mind, she, unexpectedly, kisses the Boy goodbye, abruptly ending the number. This sudden kiss confirms the progression of their relationship and, narratively, temporarily stops the narration of the love story with a note of hopeful suspense. The return to this narrative thread will come much later, in the closing number of the ballet, after a fateful chain of events that will have a serious impact on its denouement.

### ***Conclusion in No. 16***

The expectations of a happy ending for the blooming young couple are destroyed by the rape of the Girl in No. 15. A brief meeting of the two cousins in No. 16, hardly lasting one minute, narrates the conclusion of their relationship. The narration of this last encounter is mainly achieved through gestural and aural elements, both bringing back motifs already used in previous episodes. Two gestures concentrate the main narrative information, a hug and a kiss. The former is gently offered by the Boy when he notices Girl's distress. Although he is unaware of its cause, he lovingly comforts her while the music, through the first notes of the 'youthful' melody, recalls the tender relationship that they had at the beginning of the ballet. The embrace and the aural recollection of earlier happy moments finish when the Boy kisses the Girl and she energetically rejects the physical contact with aversion, pushing him away with her arms and taking her hand to her lips to erase

any trace of the kiss (See Picture 19 and Picture 20 in Appendix 1). Again, the music links the gestures of rejection with an earlier event in the ballet (the rape), recalling the cause of the Girl's reaction. The few broken notes that sound while, after the kiss, the Girl moves away from the Boy and pushes him offstage, come from melody heard in the aftermath of the rape. Her gestures of rejection, like the embrace, are performed to highly evocative music. Through these two similarly build narrative units (the embrace and the kiss, with their respective musical cues) the narration of the story progresses towards its end while, at the same time, recalls the events from the past that have triggered the progression. The embrace and the kiss thus condense important narrative information that not only concludes this storyline of the ballet but also summarizes the key moments of its development. By recalling the first signs of the love relation, on the one hand, and the brutal rape of the Girl, on the other, these two units highlight the pervasive effects of the rape, rounding off the story with a sombre tone of devastation. Significantly, this last kiss evokes both the first innocent one that the Boy and the Girl had tentatively sought during their initial *pas de deux* in No. 2, and the second brief one that they had so promisingly achieved at the end of their duet in No. 5. This third kiss in No. 16 closes the development of their relationship with an overwhelming break-up. The consummation of their love, so carefully narrated by MacMillan in its first stages, will never be possible.

### ***Incestuous Relationship***

This unexpected conclusion of the relationship also cancels the potential for scandal that it carries from the beginning. According to the programme notes, the Boy and the Girl are cousins and therefore their love is incestuous in the context of

the Edwardian family to which the Girl belongs. This feature of the relationship, inspired by Beatriz Guido and not by Colette, is an additional obstacle for its development and a companion to the rape as an element for controversy in the story. It remains, nevertheless, latent throughout the narrative. The disturbance never fully materializes, for the relationship is never disclosed in public (only one of the children witnesses the very end of the first duet) and is prevented from prospering before its consolidation. The only piece of information that the ballet does not convey through the visual, aural, kinetic or gestural cues on stage but through the written form of the programme notes thus tinges the relationship with a stigma that is not fully explored by the narrative. In the context of the whole ballet, the incestuous character of the relationship remains incidental and, possibly, a mere incentive for post-performance reflection.

### **6.3 The Husband and the Wife**

Unlike the Boy/Girl relationship, the marriage between the Husband and the Wife is not directly based in any literary source. Although some antecedents can be found both in Beatriz Guido's and Colette's novels, and in the films inspired by them, as I suggested earlier in chapter three, MacMillan's biographer Jann Parry points out that he had a closer source of inspiration in the ballet world, where many promiscuous husbands overtly flirted with dancers while their wives resignedly had to accept it (2009: 228). Whatever its source, MacMillan invested the married couple with features of bitterness and roughness that he developed across five numbers of the ballet (Nos. 4, 6, 10, 12 and 16). I will here mainly concentrate on the *pas de deux* in No. 6, which is the core number for the couple in

the ballet. In my analysis, I will flesh out three narrative strategies used by MacMillan for the portrayal of the relationship: its distinctive general dancing qualities, the signature step that recurrently appears in the choreography and the cohesive ties inserted in dance sequences and gestures, linking this duet with previous and later moments of the narration of the story.

### ***General Dancing Qualities***

Inserted just after the second *pas de deux* of the Boy and the Girl in No. 5, the introductory *pas de deux* of the married couple exploits the contiguity with the previous duet to establish a stark contrast between the two couples. The opposite qualities in most of the choreographic and movement features of the two *pas de deux* help the relationship of the adults to arise as the bleak counterpart of the tender and hopeful love of the adolescents. The music abandons the touches of enjoyment (that it embedded in the *burlesque* in No. 3) and of innocence (in the *pastorale* in Nos. 2 and 5) and becomes heavy and tragic. The dominant colour of the room where Husband and Wife meet is no longer the exuberant green of the garden but the soberer brown of the household. This change in the atmosphere parallels the less fluid and more rigid dance qualities of choreography. In contrast with the flow in the phrases of the younger couple, the steps of the older pair give the impression of being merely juxtaposed, glued together, but not gracefully interwoven. The body shapes and movement qualities follow a similar pattern. Like the lack of flow, the body postures do not look natural or spontaneous but artificial, stiff, forced, and the movement is not expansive and flexible but confined and rigid. Likewise, the floor patterns are far from the multiple arrangements of the younger couple but straight and concentric. Unlike the cousins in the garden,

who expansively covered the stage in all directions, giving an impression of freedom and carelessness, the Husband and the Wife tend to remain in the centre of the room and from there they only move in straight lines, as if their use of space is restricted to certain patterns and needs to look always tidy.

Most of the duet is danced through partnering, since the two characters occasionally separate and quickly reunite. Significantly, it is the Wife who usually tries to break the proximity, moving away from the Husband. She always comes back to him, as if she is bound to live around him. The support that the Husband provides during the passages in *adagio* is very different from the careful hands or loving arms of the Boy in the duets of the younger couple. The Husband is cold with his Wife, handling her body with abruptness. He does not look at her and, with her hands, places her body as far away from his as it is possible, hardly bearing her closeness. They do not melt into each other but overtly collide (see Picture 4 and Picture 21 in Appendix 1). This uncomfortable partnering, together with the restrained floor patterns, the lack of flow in the phrases, the stiff body postures and the confined movement qualities, portray a relationship that differs from the younger couple not only in age but, more importantly, in the lack of rapport. Husband and Wife do not get along; their intimacy is rigid and forced, and the Husband is aloof and brusque with the Wife.

### ***Signature Sequence***

To these general traits conveyed by the characteristics of the choreography, MacMillan adds a signature sequence for the characterization of the couple. As the step that Husband and Wife most frequently perform when they are together, this signature sequence is the most distinctive movement associated with them,

representing the most salient feature of their bond. The shape of this characteristic movement is a singular body carriage, stiff, while the two characters are linked by the arms. Without looking at each other, they seem to pose, as if a picture is going to be taken (See Picture 22 in Appendix 1). The introduction of this formal pose as the signature sequence of the spouses takes place at the beginning of their *pas de deux* in No. 6. In the opening bars, Husband and Wife hold this posture for a few seconds while the first notes of a heavy, grave and sad tune sound in the music<sup>3</sup>. They stand still at the back of the stage, facing the audience, while the aural cues tinge their presence with an air of gravity and unhappiness, exposing the sadness lying beneath the surface. Earlier in the ballet, the married couple adopted this stiff posture during their arrival at the house. In the atmosphere of relaxed formality that presided over the welcoming of guests, the posture fitted the social conventions. Then, not only the Husband and the Wife but also the rest of the guest couples entered and existed from the stage holding this marital deportment. In the new context of their private meeting in the room, the pose acquires new significance. The married couple extends the rigidity and the formality of the social conventions to their private sphere. In their marriage too, stiffness plays an important part and so does the existence of a legal bond linking the two characters. Husband and Wife are married together and that is the way in which they present themselves in society and in which they formally relate to each other in private, even if no other rapport exists between them. The acquisition of these connotations, which the signature pose will maintain and will exploit for diverse narrative purposes in later appearances, benefits from the contrast that it entails in relation to the portrayal of the Girl/Boy relationship in the immediately preceding event in the plot. The Girl and the Boy finished their vivacious *pas de*



*deux* in No. 5 running off the stage after their kiss. Their movements, in happiness, are the immediate preceding action to this initial pose of the adults in No. 6, so that the stillness of the married couple brings a pause to the excitement created by the younger couple. This effect of slowing down the pace of the narration becomes even more intense in the subsequent choreography, which seems to enlarge the duration of the pose. As the same heavy melody persists in the music, the couple slowly walks towards the front of the stage, holding the same position. The graveness that it denotes thus anchors the *pas de deux* in an ambience of severity that matches the main trait of the couple who performs it.

The choreographic strategy of using a particular way of moving or adopting a singular body carriage to convey the characters' features would become a hallmark in MacMillan's characterization techniques. Many of his heroines (Juliet, Manon, Anastasia, Mary Vetsera) first reveal their essence 'through the way they place one foot in front of the other in their own signature walking sequence' (Parry, 2009: 146). Jann Parry suggests that the origin of this device lies in MacMillan's first commission for television, *Steps into Ballet*, in 1954. Each programme was introduced by dancer, teacher and then assistant director of the Royal Ballet Peggy van Praagh, who, in the first episode, demonstrated how everyday walking and jumping steps could be turned into ballet to express character and emotion. MacMillan's choreography was then performed to illustrate her point. A Mother, a Father and their Child were introduced through their manner of walking (2009: 146). The most prominent examples of this approach to characterization in *The Invitation* are the Girl's first entrance and the formal marital pose of the adult couple which is being examined in this chapter. The analysis of further occurrences

of this signature movement can help reveal how it works as a narrative strategy in the portrayal of the Husband/Wife relationship.

After the opening moments in the *pas de deux* in No. 6, the pose returns twice in this duet and once more in the ballet, in No. 16. In the *pas de deux*, it comes back towards the middle, after the first signs of quarrel between the spouses have appeared, and at the end, when the children arrive in the room and start the following dance number. The pose of formality thus wraps the delineation of the relationship, a reminder, with each recurrence, of the relevance that the legal bond has for the couple. It is significant that this framing function that the pose has in the *pas de deux* reproduces, in fact, the role that it plays in the structure of the whole ballet. It is present in the introduction of the couple in No. 4; it notably appears here in No. 6; and it finally shapes the farewell of the couple in No. 16. Its repeated occurrence in the narration of the story of the married couple fortifies the weight of its narrative power as a reminder of the chief feature of their relationship. As their signature movement, it firmly underpins the rest of their choreography.

In addition to this important structural function, the formal posture also conveys key information that connects the relationship with the social context where it takes place, the Edwardian age. As discussed earlier in chapter four, marriages of convenience were then frequent in the upper-classes, entailing extramarital affairs, double standards for husbands and wives, and constant efforts for keeping up the appearances (Buckley, 1979: 139). In *The Invitation*, the connection of the Husband/Wife storyline with the Edwardian mores is suggested through this stiff façade that the married couple recurrently adopts. The strategy is not, however,

entirely attributable to MacMillan. He probably borrowed it from Antony Tudor, who had crafted it to achieve similar narrative purposes in his ballet *Jardin aux lilas* (1936)<sup>4</sup> (Parry, 2009: 228 and Barnes in Barnes et al. 1961: 10). Set also in the Edwardian period, the story narrated in *Jardin* centres on a marriage of convenience. The main character, Caroline, is about to get married with the Man She Must Marry (or the Fiancé), finding it hard to part with Her Lover. An Episode in His Past also resents the union (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 61). The ballet exposes the hypocrisy of upper-class Edwardian sexual mores, which behind a repressive, 'proper' façade, hid extramarital affairs and an emotional vacuum between the spouses (Sawyer, 2003: 64). To convey this duplicity, Tudor stressed that a central element in his scenario was the necessity of keeping up appearances. 'Characters maintain an erect, almost stiff stance in public. It is only fleetingly, in private, that they can express their real feelings' (in Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 63). One of the gestures Tudor uses to portray that stiffness is the conventional arm hold between Caroline and her Fiancé that MacMillan seems to have directly imported for his Husband and Wife. At the beginning of *Jardin*, the Fiancé takes Caroline's arm and possessively folds it around her. He then places her at his side; she puts her arm in his and, in that position, not looking at each other, they slowly walk and exit the stage. They repeat this very formal walk twice in the ballet. Towards the end, once the real affections of the main characters have been clearly portrayed, they briefly hold this posture, as a reminder of the conflict between inner feelings and external appearances. More significantly, the ballet closes with this formal, cold embrace, Caroline and the Man She Must Marry exiting and leaving her Lover behind, alone on the stage. On all three occasions, the posture

stands for the proper façade Caroline and her Fiancé must adopt in public and a reminder of their bleak future together in a marriage of convenience.

In *The Invitation*, the Husband and Wife's stiff carriage has similar connotations. It is a cold, external façade to hide inner unhappy feelings, although whether it also denotes a marriage of convenience or not remains uncertain. MacMillan is not conclusive about this detail, since the couple arrives at the Girl's house once the main action has started and no direct reference to their past is then provided. The *pas de deux* in No. 6 exposes their present bitter situation and hints at their difficult rapport with each other now but it does not clarify whether they were in love when they married or not. There is no doubt, however, that the bond that the marriage entails is robust, for it endures the consequences of the events narrated in the ballet. Despite the infidelities of both spouses and the violent rape perpetrated by the Husband, the marriage still persists at the end of the story. The sequence narrating the denouement of the storyline of the Husband and the Wife is brief and includes the signature pose of the couple for the last time. In No. 16, while Boy and Girl observed them in shock, they regain their composure, walk together in the Tudor-inspired pose and exit the stage. In this last occurrence, the formality that the step expressed in No. 4 and the coldness that it suggested in No. 6 acquire a new dimension with the trait of impermeability to changes that it now projects. By adding this feature to the narrative information already attached to it, the pose arises as the most salient choreographic device in the portrayal of the relationship of the older couple and as the one which summarizes its complexity in just one aesthetic unit.

## ***Cohesion***

A third narrative strategy that MacMillan uses to narrate the story of the Husband and the Wife is the inclusion of certain gestures and movements in their *pas de deux* that link the choreography to that of the other relationships portrayed in the ballet. The use of a similar gesture or step in a different part of the narration and with a different connotation is a common device in MacMillan's choreography. As a narrative strategy, it implies the creation of a web of narrative units consistently interrelated to narrate the story with cohesion, giving unity to the ballet. The Husband/Wife relationship provide numerous instances because it both reprises gestures already inserted in the Girl/Boy duets and introduces new steps that will be later reworked and developed for the Husband/Girl and the Wife/Boy relationships. The term *cohesion*, from discourse analysis, helps to explain how this strategy works in the choreography. In a text or an utterance, *cohesion* refers to the relationships between text and syntax and is defined by M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan as 'the set of semantic resources for linking a sentence with what has gone before' (in Alba-Juez, 2009: 303). Some forms of cohesion are realized through grammar (e.g. pronouns, conjunctions, etc.) and others through vocabulary (repetition of lexical items, synonymy, hyponymy, etc.) (Alba-Juez, 2009: 304). The term *cohesive tie* refers to the relationship between a cohesive item and the item it presupposes in the text; that is, between an item and its antecedent (Alba-Juez, 2009: 304). In dance, those terms can be used in a similar sense to refer to the devices in the choreography, the music or the stage elements (like steps, gestures, musical notes, props, etc.) that link a certain moment of the narration of the story with previous information. As a rhetorical device, not only does it provide unity to the choreography but also helps to build the imagery of the

ballet. With layers of meaning successively added and reworked, it prompts comparison between the different denotative nuances of each instance.

In the Husband/Wife relationship, a head gesture and a falling *arabesque* are two examples of earlier units from the choreography that are here retouched to achieve a new, richer connotation. In the opening moments of the *pas de deux* of the couple, a gesture by Wife leaning her head towards her Husband, as if longing to rest it on his shoulders, exploits the expressivity of the head in a similar way to the Boy's head movement towards the Girl's heart in No. 2. In both cases, it suggests a desire to gain access to another character's emotions but, by contrast, its sense is poignantly different. In the context of the younger couple relationship, the head movement is a hopeful advance of the Boy whereas within the older couple duet, it is a sorrowful yearning of the Wife. In both cases, it suggests a longing for an emotional response that their respective partners are not willing to grant but while in the first case it is the promising start of the relationship, in the second it shows the grief accumulated in a relation which is now in decline.

The falling *arabesque* also turns a positive connotation in the *pas de deux* of the Boy and the Girl into a suggestion of disharmonious rapport in the *pas de deux* of the Husband and Wife. During the first dance sequence of the couple, the Wife performs two falling *arabesques* that recall the Girl's falling steps that earlier revealed a new rapport between her and the Boy. Unlike the Girl, who performs the steps with fluidity and spontaneity, the Wife is rigid, in an open, held position that faces her Husband, not the audience, as if the movement that in the younger couple was an initial sign of unexpected flirtation has already been transformed, in the married couple, into a routine that has failed to retain any sensual or tender

trait. The support from the Husband, very different from the gentle one provided by the Boy, is even more revealing. He seems to reluctantly participate in the movement and his attitude is dismissive. He coldly holds her with his hands, avoiding eye contact and placing his body as far apart as he possibly can. His unenthusiastic support confirms the signs of the contempt for his Wife that he has briefly displayed up to this moment of the narration and matches the burst of rudeness with her that he will systematically show throughout the ballet. The tone of this supported falling step, reinforced by the contrast it marks with the qualities of the movement in the young couple, helps to portray here the tense bond between Husband and Wife.

In addition to those aspects of the relationship, the portrayal of the married couple is completed with the delineation of the sexual rapport between the two characters. Coinciding with the theme of sexual behaviour that is central in the ballet and conversely with the instances of cohesion just discussed, this facet of their intimacy provides the main instances of cohesive ties that are initiated in this duet and projected to later moments of the story. The depiction, in overt terms, of the sexual manners of the couple paves the way in narrative terms for the later graphic representation of the sexual encounters in which the two characters will participate. The choreographic devices and imagery that are introduced here to suggest rough manners and lack of sexual fulfilment are later used to portray sexual attraction (in the *pas de deux* for the Girl and the Husband), ecstasy (in the Boy/Wife duet) and forced access (in the Girl's rape by the Husband).

The main strategy that MacMillan uses to suggest erotic implications is to put the female body in the hands or arms of the male partner in a lift. The way in which the

support is provided, the shape which the two bodies project into the space and the height which the woman reaches in her elevated position (waist or shoulder level) provide the clues for the expressivity attached to the movement. In this *pas de deux*, the introduction of sexuality in these terms begins with a horizontal, held position that the Wife adopts in the Husband's arms after a leap. Facing the audience, her body is open and both arms and legs are slightly arched. The determination with which she throws her body into the Husband's arms and the overt way in which she displays it suggest that she is offering him her body with erotic intentions. The undertone of carnality is, however, not very explicit. At this moment, it is merely a hint that will be later confirmed by clearer indicators, although the possible artistic inspiration behind the pose might help to uncover its sexual connotation here. Francisco de Goya's paintings *La maja desnuda* (1795-1800) y *La maja vestida* (1805-1807) depict a woman reclined on a bed exposing her body to the viewer. Her position and the arrangement of her body is similar to the Wife's horizontal pose. MacMillan could have come across these paintings during the preparation of the ballet, if he finally drew inspiration from Spanish nineteenth century painters, as he planned in the scenario. As suggested earlier, in Chapter five, it seems plausible that the floor patterns and dance formations for the children games in No. 2 are inspired in Goya's *La gallina ciega* (1788) and therefore MacMillan's exposure to Goya's work during the creation of *The Invitation* can be ventured as likely. The influence of *Las majas* in the Wife's held pose in No. 6 could be a second token of Goya's inspiration (See Picture 23, Picture 24, and Picture 25 in Appendix 1). The shape of the Wife's body, exhibiting, like the *majas*, her underarms, seems to invite a sexual gaze, a device that MacMillan will use again years later in *Manon* (1974) to depict Manon's immodest behaviour in



the brothel. In this case, since the Wife has leapt with energy into the Husband's arms to adopt the provocative pose there, the invitation seems to be even more direct, as if she is inciting him not only to admire her body but also to take it. Her attempt fails, however, as he takes his eyes away with a gesture that seems to hurt her feelings for she makes a hand gesture turning his head to the other side as if she cannot bear to see his cold, indifferent look. The oboe in the music voices her yearning with a sad melody that expresses her despair for not being able to sexually attract her husband.

In addition to the horizontal leap inspired by Goya, a set of lifts performed by Husband and Wife in the *pas de deux* in No. 6 complete the delineation of their lack of sexual rapport. In a group of supported steps, the Wife, in the arms of the Husband and holding on to his body, adopts several positions with sexual connotations. As she balances horizontally across his waist or his legs, firmly rooted in the ground, her body adopts different shapes that look forced and ungraceful (see Picture 4 and Picture 26 Appendix 1). The impression that arises is that of a rough and unpleasant rapport. The horizontal lift recalls the shoulder lift with origins in Colette that the Boy and the Girl performed at the peak of their intimacy in No. 5. Here the Wife's body has the same horizontal position as the Girl in that lift and she is balanced in circular movements as to allow her, too, to look curiously into the horizon. However, she does not seem to be feeling a new, exciting feeling, as the Girl did, but rather, she looks as if she is trying but failing to do so. Significantly, she is not raised to shoulder level but stays at the lower plane of her Husband's waist and the music does not underline the moment with a sweet melody in the flute but with dissonant, potent chords that sound disturbing. These differences with the Girl allow the lift to acquire a new narrative sense while

retaining the association with the first occurrence. In the context of the Husband and Wife's duet and, in particular, in the framework of their group of positions with sexual connotations, the lift acquires a clearer sexual meaning, expanding the subtle undertone of the first occurrence. The particular features of the second (a dissonant music, an ungraceful shape and a lower level of elevation –waist, not shoulder height-) produce an anti-climactic effect that denotes lack of satisfaction. Later in his career, MacMillan would go on to choreograph similar forced and waist-level lifts to depict Prince Rudolf's rough sexual encounters with his wife and with his former mistress in *Mayerling* (1978). In *The Invitation*, the expressive use of lifts will later be reprised for the Wife, who will reach the ecstatic shoulder level with the Boy, and for the Girl, who will be easily lifted that high by the Husband in their duet in No. 10.

## **6.4 The Wife and the Boy**

From the two intergenerational affairs, the Girl and the Husband's relationship is developed in more detail and with more discourse time but the Boy and the Wife's relation follows a parallel development, which benefits from the plot connections with the leading one. It starts at the same point, in No. 4, and leads to a consummation too, in No. 13. The *pas de deux* in this number is the main narrative moment for the Boy/Wife couple since the rest of their story is succinctly narrated through a few gestures across the ballet (in Nos. 4, 7, 8 and 16). The main duet condenses the affair into a detailed account of their most intimate encounter and despite its brevity (hardly three minutes of discourse time), it is potent enough to stand as the counterpoint of the Girl/Husband relationship.

## ***Metonymy***

For the narrative analysis of this relationship, I will add the concept of metonymy to the toolkit of analytical notions that I have been using this far. Metonymy involves 'understanding one thing in terms of something else that is closely related to it, such as part for whole or producer for product' (Steen, 2005: 307). There are different types of metonymy. In Lakoff and Johnson's well known typology, there are seven categories: part for whole, producer for product, object used for user, controller for controlled, institution for people responsible, place for institution and place for event (2003: 39). Because in some cases metonymy works in a literal sense (ex. a part of the body standing for the whole) but in others, it operates in figurative terms (ex. the Buckingham Palace standing for the Royal family), there has been an overlap and interaction between the notions of metonymy and metaphor. Although many studies conceptualize metonymy as a type of metaphor, the traditional view sets up a contrast between them, as opposed notions. Stemming from Roman Jakobson (1956), this understanding of the relationships between metonymy and metaphor explains that metonymy involves contiguity between two related lexical items whereas metaphor involves similarity between two dissimilar concepts. Domain theory, from cognitive linguistics, has developed Jakobson's distinction, making the terms 'contiguity' and 'similarity' clearer (Denroche, 2015: 71). While metonymy involves a single conceptual domain, metaphor involves two (Lakoff et al, 2003: 265). The latest developments in this line of enquiry (Dirven et al., 2009) (Denroche, 2015) propose to see the metaphor/metonymy contrast as a continuum, with non-figurative examples of metonymy at one end and metaphor, at the other.

For narratology, metonymy can be important in three ways: as a deliberate figure of speech with a rhetorical role; as a conventionalized figure of speech naturally used in everyday language with a linguistic role; and as a mode of narration with a structural role in narrative (Steen, 2005: 307). Whereas the rhetorical and linguistic roles refer to the figurative and literal uses of metonymy just discussed, the narrative structural role refers to the chronological and causal sequencing of events in a plot. In this third meaning, the sequence of events in a plot is analysed as 'metonymic moves by the narrator, taking the addressee from one situation to another, with the situations constituting contiguous parts evoking a larger whole that is left unexpressed' (Steen, 2005: 307). In literary narratives, David Lodge (1977) has attributed a similarly metonymic function to the narrator's switching from characters to settings to events themselves (Steen, 2005: 307).

In this chapter, I will use the first, rhetorical sense of the term metonymy on two occasions. First, when I refer to instances of metonymy in Colette's text and second, when I scrutinise the narrative role of some of the gestures and body parts of the choreography. I will also work with the third usage of metonymy, relative to structure of the plot, when I analyse the first events in the plot of the Boy/Wife relationship. I must clarify now, however, that this metonymical way of examining plot sequences could be used to examine the whole plot of *The Invitation*. If I only use it in the analysis of a small portion of it, the events related to the Boy/Wife relationship, it is because it is in this story line of the ballet where the metonymical advances in the plot are, in comparison to the rest of the sections in the ballet, more prominent and therefore illustrate better this narrative strategy used by MacMillan. In addition, the metonymy in the plot matches the rhetorical importance of the metonymy in the choreography that narrates the events. The

metonymical use of gestures and body parts, which, again, is not exclusive of this relationship but dominant in the whole ballet (as the analysis of the two initial relationships has exposed) acquires here a special relevance. Since it is the third relationship to be narrated in the ballet, the metonymy appears here as an already familiar rhetorical device, especially evident in the narrative units that have already been used in the previous duets and are here retouched to serve new expressive purposes. The convergence of both these rhetorical instances of choreographic metonymy and those metonymical moves in the plot allow the notion of metonymy to be an effective analytical tool for the exposition of one of MacMillan's key narrative methods in this ballet, the concise and expressive use of gestures. I will elaborate on this argument in the analysis that follows, offering particular instances that support it. To place this claim in perspective, however, I will not only concentrate on this analytical thread but will develop it together with other aspects that the narrative analysis can also suggest. In keeping with this approach, I will start my analysis of this relationship with a reference to its literary source.

***Mme. Dalleray and Phil in Colette's Le blé en herbe***

The most direct inspiration for the delineation of the Boy and Wife's affair is Phil and Mme. Dalleray's romance in *Le blé en herbe*. Colette depicts the affair in a style that is full of sensuality and devoid of sentimentalism. In accordance with the difference in age and experience, Mme. Dalleray commands the relationship but her directions are far from being imposing or invasive. Rather, they are full of care and affection. Her younger and inexperienced partner, Phil, is 'not an easy victim, pleased to submit to her... but a dazzled and circumspect antagonist... [he is] not

the figure of a defeated man' (1980: 100). Thanks to her sensible guidance, the relationship progresses from an uneven start into an end of mutual fulfilment. When they meet, Phil is 'paralysed' by her presence (1980: 76) but when they part, he acknowledges that there has been a positive exchange. 'How could I name what she gave me? There are no words. She gave me... she only gave me. She gave. She only could take back, she took back...' (1980: 126).

In the narration of the progressive development of the relationship, the gestures of the characters play an important role. Colette's sensual style is full of references to the body and its movements, which, as they did in the passages devoted to the evolution of the affection between Phil and Vinca, function here to reveal the progression of a physical and emotional bond between Phil and Mme. Dalleray. When they start to feel attraction for each other they exchange intense glances (1980: 92) that turn into the soft caresses as their intimacy becomes closer (1980: 100) and into tender embraces once they consummate their love (1980: 111). The parts of the body engaged in this physical seduction (hands, arms, torso, mouth, etc.) are, in the text, metonymically<sup>5</sup> presented as agents of pleasant sensations (1980: 101-102, 104, 111, 115, 120). Phil, for instance, recalls 'the power of a hand or a mouth to shake the foundations of a peaceful universe', when he evokes the 'cataclysm provoked by his gesture of finally placing his naked arm in the palm of Mme. Dalleray's inviting hand' (1980: 101).

Colette's selection of words related to corporeal senses does not, however, keep the story in the realm of physical sensations. Far from being a mere hedonistic portrayal of the relationship, her novella also exposes the emotional response triggered by the sexual experience. Her narrator illustrates the close bond between

actions and feelings when, in an intrusive comment, she resents that the world of emotions she is presenting 'is often called, *superficially*, physique' [my emphasis] (1980: 120). To further her point, she describes the impact of the sexual initiation on Phil as a new knowledge he has acquired through 'his hands, ears and eyes' but which, actually, 'ennobles his soul' (1980: 120). This commentary matches earlier passages in the novella, such as Phil's memory of Mme. Dalleray not merely as 'a sweet shoulder'<sup>6</sup> or 'a gratifying warmth' but also as 'his haven' (1980: 111).

In addition to the narrator's intrusive comments, the most frequent narrative strategy that Colette uses to convey this connection between body experiences and emotional responses is the combination of descriptive sensual passages and dialogues with meditations from the characters on the nature and extent of their feelings. In the case of Phil, his inner thoughts reveal an adolescent that is, at first, confused and bewildered about his encounters with Mme. Dalleray (1980: 105, 106, 109, 115) but who progressively learns to accept his feelings (1980: 117, 120, 125) and is finally able to manage them (in his anger, after she leaves without a farewell, he poignantly calls her 'his mistress' -1980: 125-).

In her more mature meditation on the affair, Mme. Dalleray regrets that she has not allowed herself to demonstrate any love and, as a consequence, has failed to give Phil any impression that he could gain access to her heart. Aware of the obstacles to their affair (their different ages and her marital status), she convinces herself that it was better to go through the experience under the illusion that no feelings were involved, that she was just in need of carnal affection and was generous in returning what she took (1980: 117). This only instance where the narrator reveals Mme. Dalleray's emotions completes the portrait of her

involvement with Phil, so far only narrated through her actions. Her authority in the seduction and her tenderness with Phil acquire thus a new meaning, exposing that she was also affectively fragile and was actually moved by him. Her leading role in the couple is thus reconfigured as the consequence of her older age and larger experience and no longer as the product of her lust. From this new angle, her sudden departure (with no farewell) can be understood as her pragmatic and difficult solution for a love affair which is doomed to failure.

In both characters, the emotional consequences of the relationship seem bigger and more complex than what they allow themselves to acknowledge and, in both cases, expose that the sexual encounter has had a deep impact on their feelings. The inner reflections that reveal them complement the physical gestures that depict their encounters, conveying a fuller picture of their relationship. From these inner reflections, Mme. Dalleray arises not as a predator in search of young flesh but as a woman aware of the emotional implications of her actions and careful in handling them. Similarly, Phil emerges not merely as the inexperienced adolescent in awe of the sensorial discovery propitiated by an older lover but also as a young man learning to cope with his feelings. Colette's combination of physical and psychological insights into her characters represents the intergenerational affair not as a unidimensional or stereotypical seduction but as complex and rich relationship devoid of any cliché or sentimentality. This type of portrayal is very much reflected in the Boy and Wife's relationship in *The Invitation*. MacMillan seems to have opted for a similar nuanced depiction of the affair, with gestures, movements and music that suggest more than the mere physical connotations that they immediately express. Colette's influence in the delineation of this story line of the ballet seems thus larger than a simple import of characters and events. At the



level of the narration, the discourse that MacMillan builds to convey the Wife and Boy's story contains moments and strategies that are reminiscent of Colette's multilayered, often metonymical text. Although not all the choreography for the couple shares the Colettean constant sensual/emotional duality (sometimes MacMillan's use of gestures is chiefly a device to condense narrative information), many of the key moments of this relationship are expressed through gestures or powerful narrative units with subtle connotations. And since it is the third relationship portrayed in the ballet and the two characters are part of those two earlier couples, the narration builds on choreographic strategies already introduced and developed, especially from the Girl and Boy's duets, also heavily inspired by Colette.

#### ***Introductory Gestures in No. 4 and Nos. 7 to 10***

The gestures that narrate the first stages of development of the relationship lack, however, the sensual implications inspired by Colette. Although they introduce the tenor of the choreography for the central duet of the couple (where gestures play a key role in the narration), their main narrative purpose is to present the initial phase of the affair with great economy of discourse time. Unlike Colette's text, where the affair has a central role as soon as Mme. Dalleray is introduced in the story, in the ballet, it progresses in the shadow of the dominant Girl/Husband relationship, especially during these initial stages. As Husband and Girl seek to become closer during the social occasions that propitiate their meetings (the arrival of guests in No. 4, the dance lesson in Nos. 7 and 8, and the ball in Nos. 9 and 10), their respective partners are driven to share the same spaces and occasions and when their flirtation becomes more overt, Boy and Wife are brought

to feel a similar distress and embarrassment. These common experiences and feelings become the grounds for their affair.

In the plot of the ballet, the development of this subplot heavily relies on the thread of the Girl/Husband affair. Both plot lines are largely interwoven, with the former framed within the events of the latter. This connection allows the type of narration to be particularly metonymical in the case of the Boy/Wife relationship. Since the emergence of other adult/adolescent liaison is narrated with greater detail and more discourse time, the presentation of this second one does not reproduce similar situations or actions. It succinctly narrates the relevant events without much elaboration, relying on their metonymical effect to suggest the whole situation by narrating only a part. In this case, the evocation is facilitated by the immediacy with the events of the other relation and by the many common features that they share (age difference, adultery, etc.). The condensation of narrative information in a few brief events in the plot is especially evident in the gestures in Nos. 4 and 7 to 10, which narrate the birth of this bond.

In No. 4, the first meeting between Boy and Wife takes place during the Husband and Girl's first encounter. As soon as the Wife notices her Husband's interest and closeness to the Girl, she interrupts their presentation by offering her hand to the Boy. While all the narrative attention is concentrated on the main event and the Wife's real attention to the Boy is minimal (he just provides her with the excuse to stop her Husband), her intervention allows the first opportunity for the Boy to be impressed by her. He is gallant with her and kisses her hand, provoking the Husband's annoyance (see Picture 27 in Appendix 1).

During the dance lesson and the ball, this introduction, which initially seemed inconsequential and merely instrumental to the Wife's real purpose, starts to develop in the direction of a love affair. In Nos. 7 and 8, Boy and Wife exchange the first appraising glances, which, again, are not the central narrative focus of the action since they only replicate similar glances between Girl and Husband (Barnes et al., 1961: 11). In the ball, they both are uncomfortable with the overt display of the Girl in her dance with the Husband (Money, 1967: 201), a circumstance that brings them emotionally closer. Their admiring and sympathetic glances complete the set of gestures scattered in these dance numbers<sup>7</sup>. Quietly, succinctly and happening on the margins of the main action at the centre of the stage, they narrate the events of this second, parallel storyline in the plot of the ballet.

### ***Pas de deux in No. 13***

Without further direct elaboration, the culmination of these incipient advances takes place in the duet of the couple in No. 13. The narrative strategy shaping this *pas de deux* is radically different from the preceding events. By contrast with the metonymical, succinct account of the initial steps in the relationship, the encounter is unhurriedly narrated, in detail and with an explicit representation of the sexual act. The overt narration of the consummation is an important narrative choice in MacMillan's reconfiguration of the story imported from Colette. Unlike its literary and film antecedents, which narrate the encounters through ellipsis, the plot of the ballet fills the narrative gap<sup>8</sup> of the sexual act. It directly depicts the intercourse, underlying thus the importance of sex in the story. The explicitness of the scene matches earlier references (such as the game in front of the draped statutes or the fight of the two cockerels) and parallels the inclusion of the rape later, which also

fills the narrative gap of the elliptical account of the crime in the plot of the source novel and film. The event of the sexual meeting between Boy and Wife also possesses the peculiarity of lacking any later sequel in the plot (it is a one-night stand), in contrast with the longer affair depicted in the novella and film. In MacMillan's reconfiguration of the story, the resulting plot thus not only changes the duration of the event (from zero discourse time in the ellipsis to a three-minute scene) but also the number of occurrences (from several instances to a single one). This compression of events into a single one is again the consequence of the existence of two parallel story lines in the plot of the ballet, with this narrative thread adjusting to the just one event on the other. It also directly derives from the time frame chosen for the ballet, which is not Colette's long summer but a single long summer day.

At the level of the narration, the choreography for the Boy/Wife duet elaborates on choreographic material used earlier, especially in the Girl/Boy *pas de deux* in Nos. 2 and 5. Head and hand gestures, lifts and embraces that were used there are here reworked to express the peculiarities of this relationship. This choreographic strategy exploits the expressivity of the small gestures inserted in the dance sequences and helps to convey the timid beginning of the seduction, the emotional bond that slowly grows between the characters and the progressive advances they make towards the fulfilling climax. This triple information is progressively, and in many cases also simultaneously, disclosed in the three sequences of steps that lead to the climatic, lift-dominated culmination of the number. A lift at the end of each of those sequences illustrates the increasingly closer sexual relationship that is emerging between the two characters.

### ***First Sequence***

In the first sequence, the first gesture in the choreography is made by the Wife when she takes the Boy's hand. He is surprised by her contact and rejects it, thus reproducing the Girl's reaction to similar attempts from him in Nos. 2 and 5. The Wife tries again, this time directing her hand to his heart, as if clarifying that she is seeking permission to get there. The waltz starts to sound at this moment, allowing her slow movements forwards and backwards (as she maintains her arm and hand aimed at the Boy) to have the same dance quality and tone of flirtation as the Husband/Girl waltz in No. 10. The Wife's hand finally reaches the Boy's heart, an achievement that she immediately takes forward by moving around the Boy while keeping her arm on his body. To conclude the series, she uses his support to perform a small lift. He grants it but feels puzzled again by the intimacy it entails. This first lift summarizes her advances this far and, by expanding the sexual connotations the lifts had in previous episodes<sup>9</sup>, it gives a hint of the erotic direction the duet is taking.

### ***Second Sequence – 'Head to Heart' Gesture***

The second sequence has a similar pattern of Boy's puzzlement followed by Wife's firm but tender advances, and sexually-charged lift to conclude. Again gestures possess a special narrative significance. After the Boy's puzzlement has taken both characters away and apart at the end of the first sequence, they share an intense glance that encourages the Boy to approach the Wife and to place his head on her heart (see Picture 28 in Appendix 1). She allows the contact, patiently allowing the Boy to enjoy the feeling. This 'head to heart' gesture is not new in the ballet. Used twice earlier (in Nos. 2 and 6), its expressive trajectory terminates here by finally

uniting the two characters that in the two previous occurrences have tried but have failed to obtain the emotional comfort it symbolizes. On the first occasion, it was the Boy who attempted to rest his head on the Girl's heart but was not successful, since she shied away. On the second instance, the Wife expressed her longing for her husband's affection by directing her head towards his shoulder. In that case, she knew in advance that her gesture was a vain effort, since she herself aborted the attempt, as if anticipating his disdain. On its last third occurrence, in the Boy/Wife *pas de deux*, the gesture finally finds the right place to succeed. As a narrative unit with two antecedents in the choreography, it now embeds a nuanced semantic content that builds upon and enriches the semantic content presented earlier. In a new context and with different characters, it succinctly expresses the realization of an emotional bond, the only one to prosper (even if only temporarily) in the ballet. While on the first occasion, the gesture suggested the emergence of (adolescent) love and, on the second, it exposed the absence of (marital) love, on this third case, it announces the consummation of (intergenerational and adulterous) love. By using the same gesture on the three occasions, the narration traces a link between the three relationships, exposing their differences and providing a cue that helps to explain the common grounds that allow the third couple to grow. The origins and mixed nature of the Boy/Wife relationship can be traced back to its origins through this gesture (among other elements). As a narrative strategy, the reutilization of the narrative unit functions as a recurrent metonymy whose semantic content emerges with new, richer nuances as it accumulates layers of meaning.

On this occasion, the metonymical effect of the 'head to heart' gesture is similar to Phil's action of placing his naked arm into Mme. Dalleray's inviting hand in

Colette's story (1980: 102). Placed at the beginning of the second sequence of steps, it suggests that the Boy, like Phil, is ready to accept the Wife's advances. The metonymical pattern leading to that moment also seems inspired by Colette, even if the set of gestures is different. In *Le blé en herbe*, the first physical contact between the characters is initiated by Mme. Dalleray, who seizes Phil's wrist (1980: 101). He, puzzled, rejects her hand (1980: 101) and 'a significant immobility' ensues when she does not move her hand and keeps it open for Phil to accept it (1980: 101). He lowers his head, reflects, and 'then, with no rush, with deliberate slowness, with calculated courage, place[s] his naked arm back into her open hand' (1980: 102).

### ***Caresses and Embraces***

Colette stops the narration of the encounter there, opening an ellipsis that MacMillan avoids and prefers to fill in with choreographic material that inserts caresses and embraces with origins in the literary source. Borrowed from later encounters between Mme. Dalleray and Phil ('A firm and velvety hand lands in his' -1980: 114-. 'She placed her arms around his shoulders... around his naked arms, his brown head' -1980: 117-), they become, in the ballet, important narrative units to convey the sexual progression. The caresses usually precede the embraces, working both as tokens of the Wife's affection and as heralds of closer intimacy. They are repeated several times across the duet, the only dance number in which they appear. This exclusivity makes them the most characteristic kinetic element in the narration of the relationship, a feature that possesses special significance in the characterization of the affair by contrast with the parallel Husband/Girl relationship. Unlike the forceful and aggressive movements performed by the

Husband there, the caresses bring tenderness and softness to the sexual advances of the Wife here. And the ensuing embraces extend their connotation, in a variation of the wrapping hugs that the Girl already introduced in her duets with the Boy.

### ***Lifts***

The erotic advances and the sexual satisfaction depicting the Wife/Boy encounter are conveyed in this duet through the same choreographic device that consistently suggests carnal intimacy across the ballet, the lifts performed by the dancers. A few features adapt them here to the idiosyncrasy of this affair. The support that the Boy provides to the Wife is, for instance, minimal in comparison to the instances from other *pas de deux*, and is not provided by his hands and arms but by his back. The Wife leaps into it by herself, without any impulse from him, unlike the Girl, who needed the careful preparation and help from the Boy in No. 5 and the effortless propulsion of the Husband in No. 10. The shape formed by Boy and Wife together is very revealing too. The two bodies resemble a vertical icon, projecting its energy upwards, as high up as it can, in contrast with the horizontal shapes and waist-level height that the Wife reached with her Husband. In this new version of the lifts, the suggestion is that the Wife finds in the Boy the sexual manners and comfort that her Husband never grants her (see Picture 29 in Appendix 1).

The climax of the sexual act deserves particular attention. It is suggested by a percussive burst in the music and a movement of the Wife with her leg, kicking the air with a small series brief, sudden trembles while, in a lift, she leans on the Boy's back. The quivering of her legs evokes the shake of pleasure experienced by the characters at that climatic moment of their encounter. MacMillan's inspiration for this stylized portrayal of the erotic sensations might come from Frederick Ashton's



ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* (1951), in which he performed while he was still a dancer (Thorpe, 1985: 15). Based on the Greek myth, Ashton's ballet is a lyrical portrayal of rustic love. The protagonists of the love story are also two adolescents, Daphnis and Chloe, and an elder woman, Lykanion, plays an important part in their story, for she initiates Daphnis to the pleasures of physical love. The parallelism with Colette's triangle (Phil, Vinca, Mme. Dalleray) is evident and expressly acknowledged by the French writer, who makes an explicit comparison between Phil and Daphnis in *Le blé* (1980: 81). In Ashton's ballet, the encounter between Daphnis and Lykanion is narrated in a sensual *pas de deux* where some movements performed by Lykanion with her legs have a prominent role in representing the eroticism of the encounter. Firstly, the female leg surrounds twice the male body evoking, with graceful subtlety, an intense close embrace. Immediately after, while Lykanion is lifted by Daphnis, it trembles for a few seconds, implying the consummation of their love.

In *The Invitation*, that choreographic material is expanded and made more explicit. The final quivering leg has several antecedents in the duet, where the ballerina's leg is metonymically used to suggest both the Wife's sensual use of her body to seduce the Boy and her responsiveness to the Boy's advances (see Picture 30 and Picture 31 in Appendix 1). In all these cases, the metonymy is rhetorically used with a symbolism that approaches it to a metaphor. The leg stands for the reaction of the whole body but also makes visible the quivering experienced in the genitals. They portray sensations that take place in another part of the body, thus hosting, in figurative terms, connotations that come from a close but different organ. With this transference of attributes and the metaphoric, synesthetic effect it entails, the rhetorical possibilities of the metonymy are exploited to the full of their potential.

Later in his career, MacMillan would use a similar choreographic device, to humorous effect, in *Elite Syncopations* (1974). In the first song of the ballet, 'The Sunflower Slow Rag', the leading female dancer shakes her hips, not her hand, to get rid of the male hand that seeks inappropriate flesh contact with her body. In *The Invitation*, the metonymical use of the ballerina's leg, in confluence with the spatial 'up' symbolism embedded in the lifts, epitomises the choreographic strategy used by MacMillan for rendering the first of the two graphic sexual encounters of the ballet.

### ***General Choreographic Features***

The choreography in which these gestures, movements and lifts are inserted contains other narrative cues that also contribute to the narration of the encounter and to the characterization of the relationship. In general terms, the duet is a supported *pas de deux* where there are no solos for any of the characters. The partnering is close, intimate, with the two bodies close together, especially during the Wife's embraces and lifts supported by the Boy's back. This close proximity is broken at intervals, when the Boy's puzzlement leads him to briefly run away from the Wife. The floor patterns on these occasions are not very wide or long, as if he only needs a few moments to reconsider the situation before returning to the Wife. She is patient on these separations, allowing the distance with calmness and welcoming his returns with soft, slow movements. The pace of the steps and gestures after these hesitant moments is unhurried, slow, and their dynamic quality is contained, quiet. They contrast with the sharp, pulsing movements (like the Wife's kicks in the air) that evoke the physical aspects of the sexual act. These contrasting qualities are also reflected in the flow of the phrases. While the flow is

smooth in the moments of tenderness, it is slightly jerky during the most overtly sexual movements. The combination of both types of flow (the former highlighting the emotional side, the latter, the physical aspects) characterizes this relationship in terms that differ both from the complete absence of fluidity in the duet of Husband and Wife (where it suggests no emotional or sexual rapport) and from the spontaneous, silky qualities of the duets of the Boy and the Girl (where they reflect the close connection between the two childhood friends). Closer to the latter thanks to the smoothness and slow pace of some of the movements, it still marks a distance from it. The stilted flow and bursts of energy in the most overly sexual movements portrays the actualisation of the encounter, an accomplishment never achieved by the young couple. In the Boy/Wife relationship, the mixed flow and pace of the phrases (among other cues) reflects the convergence of both the emotional and the physical attachment, differentiating the union from the innocent love of the adolescents, the unhappy and unfulfilling marriage of the adult couple and the violence of the Girl/Husband encounter.

### ***Music - Romantic Melody***

The music of the Boy/Wife *pas de deux* is a significant factor in the narration of the events of the affair. Three different tunes (the 'Romantic' melody, the tango and the waltz) directly contribute to shape the narrative information transmitted to the audience. The 'romantic' melody, with its hopeful tune, sounds in the strings while the Wife first caresses and then hugs the Boy on the floor during the pause where his vulnerability is exposed. The aural cue in this narrative sequence contributes too to the up/down contrast exploited by the choreography. The pitch contour of the melody starts with a pronounced ascending interval of one octave and then

progressively descends to recover the starting level in two stages (see Musical Example 5 in Appendix 1). The initial rise and the falling arch after it suggest a hopeful impetus rewarded by a quiet calmness, especially because the first two notes erupt in the score with a heavier orchestration and a rise in dynamics. In this instance, the melody is interwoven with the actions of the Boy kneeling down and the Wife caressing and embracing him, so that while the second part of the melody matches the Wife's tender gestures, the first part marks a contrast with the Boy's movement (music up, Boy down). Anticipating the resolution of the sequence, the divergence softens the Boy's puzzlement and recoil by suggesting that there is nothing that he needs to worry about, as the Wife confirms with her immediate intervention. The positive connotations brought by the melody reduce the Boy's doubts to a momentary insecurity, soon to be overcome. The previous instances in which the same sweet tune has appeared in the ballet (all loving and affectionate) help the musical cues to create a hopeful mood here, unequivocally evoking those tender moments narrated earlier in the story. In this same number, the melody was present during the 'head to heart' gesture in which the Wife allowed the Boy to rest his head on her chest. In No. 2 (the first Boy/Girl duet), this tune appeared twice, firstly, during the *promenade* the Girl playfully performs when she accepts the Boy's hand for the first time, and secondly, while the Boy embraces the Girl's knees after they have been cheerfully dancing 'side by side'. The four occurrences of the melody refer to similarly romantic moments, all thus linked through their common musical element.

## ***Tango***

In addition to the 'romantic' melody, a tango-inspired melody plays a relevant role in the score of the *Wife/Boy pas de deux*. Unlike the melodious and already familiar 'romantic' melody, the 'tango' tune is new and exclusive for this number, and moves away from the affective side of the Boy/Wife relationship to stress the carnality of the encounter. The rhythmic sharpness of the tango and its explicit connotations of eroticism stress the Wife's most sexually-charged movements and the lift-dominated phases of the duet. The contribution of the music here bolsters the contrast between the emotional and physical aspects of the encounter, making the dissimilarities that arise from the different flow and pace in the dance qualities of the passage stronger. The tango notes coat the guiding role of the Wife in the seduction with an air of lust that matches the overt (yet stylised<sup>10</sup>) movements depicting the sexual consummation. The musical emphasis on this aspect exposes the twofold nature of the relationship on the ballet. Unlike Colette, who focuses on the emotions involved in the encounter and depicts the physical sensations through a highly sensual narration, MacMillan maintains the main tenets of the novella but adds explicit references to sex that the tango music makes especially evident. The role of the aural cues in highlighting this aspect reinforces the relevance that the exploration of sex has in the story.

## ***Waltz***

A third melody completes the significant contribution of the music to the narrative information of this number. In the first sequence of steps, a waltz sounds while the Wife holds the Boy's hand for the first time and takes it to her heart. They then balance forwards and backwards to the  $\frac{3}{4}$  time rhythm of the music, evoking a

waltz dance. The fragment is short but echoes the waltz that Husband and Girl have danced earlier, in public, in No. 10, and anticipates the waltz these two characters will dance again before the rape in No. 15. In all three cases, the waltz music announces the birth of an intergenerational affair and/or the imminence of the seduction, with the adults taking the initiative and leading the dance. Symbolically, the aural sign of the waltz is present at the moments when the two adults start the game of the seduction and invite the youngsters to join in. With the waltz in the background, the invitation to sex is metaphorically issued as an invitation to dance<sup>11</sup>, which is accepted in both cases. After a similar start, however, the two affairs will go through different routes, the waltz thus also marking the moment in the plot where the two parallel storylines start to diverge, one taking the predicted direction of the sexual act, the other the unexpected (though foreshadowed) direction of the violent rape. With the waltz as the only discourse cue that the two encounters have in common, it becomes the key narrative device that unites both affairs in their shared thematic exploration of sexual initiation and, at the same time, introduces their diversion towards radically different developments.

### ***Conclusion in No. 16***

The denouement of the Boy/Wife relationship is concise and metonymical again in both the rhetorical and the plot levels. It takes place in No. 16 through a short sequence of steps that includes an ardent embrace and a kiss. The gestures are embedded within the general rush at the beginning of the number, when the crowd intermittently erupts into the stage after the story has reached the climax with the rape. In these initial moments of the final dance number, the main narrative

interest is no longer in the Boy/Wife relationship but lies only on the consequences of the Husband/Girl encounter. The two plot lines have already abandoned their parallel paths and the dominance of the Husband/Girl thread in the plot considerably reduces the discourse time for the conclusion of the Boy/Wife relationship. Despite their brevity, however, it contains enough narrative information to summarize the nature of the encounter and the impact that it leaves on each of the characters.

Very much in the line of the puzzled Phil who, in Colette's text, does not recognize his new manly face in the mirror after his first night with Mme. Dalleray (1980: 106), the Boy maintains a circumspect air in the ballet. He is still in the process of absorbing the experience when he meets the Wife for the last time. He is doubtful about how to proceed and it is the Wife who, aware of the inevitability of the farewell, advances and fervently embraces him while a few tango notes recall their intimate encounter. Encouraged, the Boy reacts and kisses her goodbye with passion. The mixed feelings and double side of the encounter (emotional, sexual) are suggested here through the combination of gestural and musical cues from the main duet of the couple. The denouement thus closes the affair with great economy of means, in a last instance of the metonymical narration and emplotment that is dominant in the representation of the relationship (see Picture 33 and Picture 34 in Appendix 1).

## **6.5 The Girl and the Husband**

The fourth relationship portrayed in the ballet, the relationship of the Girl and the Husband, is, narratively, the most important one. Not only does it take more

discourse time than the other three<sup>12</sup> but it also sustains the main narrative interest of the ballet. The main duets of the Husband and Girl are in No. 10 (the ball) and in No. 15 (the rape) but the increasing attraction between the two is the central focus of three more numbers, the dancing lesson in No. 7, the solo that the Girl dances for the Husband in No. 8, and the beginning of the ball in No. 9. In general terms, the choreography for the couple draws on the material from the Wife/Husband duet in No. 6, with a few traces from the Boy/Girl duets in Nos. 2 and 5. Lifts denoting sexual advances are again an important choreographic device and the most recognizable link between this couple and the other three relations. In addition to the dance passages, an important part of the birth and early development of the relationship is conveyed through gestures like glances, through moments of intense, expressive stillness, and through key musical cues.

The main sources for the delineation of the events and the features of the relationship are Beatriz Guido's novel and Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's film. Unlike Colette's inspiration for the Boy/Girl and Boy/Wife relationships in the ballet, which is evident not only in the main events in the plot, but also in the rhetorical devices in the choreography, Guido's influence mostly concerns the plot, hardly reaching the kinetic imagery. In this aspect, it is Torre Nilsson who provides a more obvious antecedent, especially in the areas of music, spatial configuration and embodiment of the sexual attraction. Some scenes and shots from the film have direct correlations in the ballet and much of the tone of impending tragedy and the tensions between the two main characters in the film is achieved through similar stylistic strategies in the ballet.



### **Torre Nilsson's *La casa del ángel***

In the film *La casa del ángel* (1957), the first decisive close contact between the young protagonist of the story, Ana, and her rapist Pablo is inserted within the background of a ball at Ana's house<sup>13</sup>. A long sequence taking place in different spaces frames the encounter within the festive social event by isolating a single point of narrative attention after having presented several. The film technique achieving this effect alternates long shots with medium shots and close-ups<sup>14</sup>, a combination that MacMillan might have translated into the kinetic, aural and visual selective focus on Husband and Girl in the general scene in No. 9 and the subsequent centrality of the couple in their duet in No. 10. A closer analysis of the scene in the film helps to flesh out this correlation.

When the ball starts, neither Ana nor Pablo are in the house. The film shows how they arrive separately at the party but do not join the ball and go upstairs instead. Ana goes to her room while Pablo pays a visit to Ana's father. Before the conversation between the two men, Pablo and Ana exchange an intense glance at the top of the stairs. Despite the fact that the action has moved upstairs, the framing presence of the ball never disappears, since the diegetic music of the party is always heard in the background. After the chat between Pablo and her father, Ana and Pablo meet again on the landing of the first floor. They politely greet each other and, in a close-up, Ana blushes. They start to part but when the waltz begins downstairs Pablo returns and invites her to dance. He holds her hand and leads her down, the film explicitly showing the transition from the space upstairs to the ballroom downstairs through long shots framing the two characters while they walk down the stairs. When they arrive at the bottom, two consecutive close-ups

concentrate on Ana and on Pablo before they start to dance. A long shot shows then how they join the rest of the dancing couples, to the surprise of one of Ana's sisters, first, and of her mother, secondly, both shown in two medium shots. The long shot is then followed by a long series of close-ups of Ana and Pablo as they waltz. The scene concludes with their farewell, still narrated with close-ups, at the end of the dance. Ana rushes upstairs, leaving the ballroom and putting an end to the sequence.

The film technique in this excerpt serves a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, it uses a multi-spatial location with three different areas (the landing on the first floor, the ballroom on the ground floor, and the stairs) so that the characters' transits through and between them help create the narrative interest that finally reaches its peak in the waltz. The tension released there is anticipated by lingering in a minute description of the preceding moments. Additionally, the passage among spaces also possesses important symbolical implications, since Pablo leads Ana from her bedroom/childhood upstairs to her ballroom/adolescence downstairs. On the other hand, the choice of shots that visually present these events allows for a progressive dramatic stress on the experience of the characters. Long shots frame the action in its context whereas close-ups highlight the increasing mutual attraction between the characters. Although there are two close-ups upstairs and two more downstairs, when they start to dance, long shots dominate the first part of the sequence. Only at the end, after several long shots framing Ana and Pablo within the crowd of dancing couples, does the narrative attention finally rest on the two characters, exclusively. A long series of close-ups as they waltz portrays their feelings. Their faces, rather than their dancing bodies, are framed by the camera. The external characteristics of the dance are no longer

the focus of narrative attention. Within the whole sequence, the combination of long shots and close ups, with predominance of the former at the beginning and of the latter at the end enables the film's narrative strategy to direct the attention from general action to a particular event happening within it and to move from external action to the inner experience of the characters.

In MacMillan's ballet, a similar narrowing down and shift in focus takes place during dance numbers 9 and 10. No. 9 introduces the ball in general terms, although it concentrates on the Husband and the Girl<sup>15</sup>. Their actions are equivalent to the fragment of the film sequence framed in long shots (both upstairs and downstairs, with the couple dancing among the rest of the guests). The Husband's slow approach to the Girl and his action of leading her to the centre of the stage work to prepare, like the long shot in the stairs in the film, for the exclusivity of the narrative attention in their duet in No. 10. In this number, which closely corresponds to the close-ups in the film, their waltz together is the only focus of attention, since the rest of the couples stop dancing, surround them and just observe their dance. In addition, the choreography for the waltz progresses from the description of the external action of dancing to the exposition of the internal growing attraction between the characters. The dance becomes evocative of their feelings rather than illustrative of their waltz, in close correspondence to the chain of attention-catching close-ups of Ana and Pablo in the film. The choreographic strategy to achieve this emotional equivalence will be fleshed out in more detail later in this chapter.

A final direct influence of the film in these two consecutive numbers of the ballet relates to the reactions of shock of Ana's sisters and mother at her behaviour when

she dares to dance with Pablo. These expressions of astonishment are, in the film, inserted through two close-ups in the long shot at the beginning of the waltz. In the ballet, they are less brief, for they are interleaved at different moments of both No. 9 and No. 10. Paradoxically, they are less evident in the latter than in the former. While the Husband and the Girl dance the waltz, some of the characters cast a few stunned glances at them and only during a brief pause in their dance (when they perform a few gestures of tenderness), the shock is explicit in the Wife's imploration to the Mother. More overtly, in No. 9, the Wife makes several worried gestures towards her Husband and the Governess expresses similar concerns, although she finally decides not to intervene to stop the couple from taking the centre of stage. Placed in this introductory number, these reactions are not only comments on the action, as in the film, but also signs that anticipate the coming events, creating interest in the waltz that is about to start. Their narrative role is thus broader in the ballet than in the film so that while the influence of the film technique is evident and partially maintained, MacMillan's additional reworking allows for a dual narrative purpose absent in the film. The new anticipatory function of these gestures of concern is part of the instrumental role that No. 9 plays in paving the way for the first climatic moment of the Husband/Girl relationship in No. 10.

### ***Pas de deux in No. 10 – Waltz in the Ball***

The expectations created in No. 9 are fulfilled in the duet between Husband and Girl in No. 10, which brings the initial stages of their affair (first meeting in No. 4, glances in No. 7, flirtatious solo of the Girl in No. 8 and Husband's decisive invitation to dance in No. 9) to an end. This *pas de deux*, the last event in this

storyline before the reappearance of the two characters in No. 15 for the scene of the rape, is perhaps the most accomplished number in the ballet in terms of its narrative complexity. It exploits the dramatic possibilities of dance to the maximum, conveying a wide range of narrative information in a highly condensed way. In scarcely two minutes, the combination of kinetic and aural cues provides narrative information that belongs to three different levels. Firstly, these cues narrate the external action performed by Husband and Girl (they waltz in a ball taking place in the storyworld). Secondly, they express the internal feelings of the characters (both experience a growing sexual attraction as they dance together). And thirdly, those cues intrusively<sup>16</sup> send warning signs of an imminent tragedy, foreshadowing the twisted denouement of this affair. Each type of information is conveyed through different cues. The external action is portrayed through waltz steps in the dance (or rather, the artistic recreation of waltz steps) that match the waltz bars in the score, which function thus as diegetic music. The inner experience is conveyed through dance movements which do not belong to the social dance but to the ballet tradition and which are performed to music that moves away from the waltz melody and thus becomes non-diegetic, although it retains the waltz rhythmic pattern. The warnings about the impending disaster are embedded in this non-diegetic music. The terrible fate of the infatuated characters is expressed through different aspects of the music, such as sinister tunes, potent assonances and sudden or progressive increases in tempo and in dynamics.

The structure of the *pas de deux* reflects the external/internal duality in the events being narrated by interweaving waltz steps with ballet phrases. The duet starts with a waltz phrase followed by a first series of ballet steps with *arabesques* and spins that come from the Girl/Boy duets. Switching back to waltz again, there is a

brief pose that marks the beginning of a series of lifts that reprise the already familiar device of conveying erotic connotations through supported elevations. After another waltz phase, there is, again, a last series of lifts, this time inspired by the Wife/Husband duet and therefore more overtly sexual. The duet ends when the ballroom hold that the Husband and the Girl start to adopt, with the intention of resuming the waltz, is broken up by the Mother. The reemergence of the waltz at different moments during the number unifies the action, placing the encounter in the context of the ball in the story.

### ***First Series – Girl is Elated***

Within this pattern, the main role of choreography for the *pas de deux* is to portray the Girl's growing fascination for the Husband. With the exception of the waltz steps, the rest of the kinetic cues emanating from the couple in this duet refer to this aspect of the narration. Arranged in three phases separated by waltz steps, each dance sequence develops the suggestion of sexual attraction between the characters and takes it further. The first series portrays the Girl's elation. With the Husband's support, she performs movements that she has earlier danced with the Boy but which she now executes with a fully sensual conscience. Three significant steps belong to this initial excitement. Firstly, the Girl leaps twice into a widely outstretched position in the arms of the Husband. Although her movement recalls a previous similar leap, her very open legs, stressed by the Husband when he slowly lowers her body in front of him, add an explicit sexual connotation absent in the first instance. A similar effect emerges from the falling *arabesques* that the Girl repeats for the Husband. His expert arms provide the support slightly later than the Boy and with far more confidence, making the movement look more off balance

and, therefore, more daring and exciting. Finally, a chain of spins where the Husband propels the Girl with energy gives the impression that she is ecstatically happy in his company. Her arms, open, underline the sense of the rotation and her head is seductively bent backwards, exposing the abandon with which she trusts her body to the Husband's arms (see pictures 35 and 36 in Appendix 1).

### ***Second series – Shoulder lifts***

The second series in the duet still builds on the choreographic material of the Boy/Girl duets to show the evolution of the Girl's attraction for the Husband. The shoulder lift that allowed for the first intimate contact between the adolescents is here recalled in a series of shoulder lifts that become more explicitly sexual. Differences in the type of support and in the Girl's position suggest this new connotation. Unlike the Boy, who knelt down to help the Girl rise up more easily and then very carefully handled her body in the air, the Husband lifts her with ease and determination. She, in turn, performs the lift with no hesitation and, in the air, emphatically opens her legs, suggesting that she is ready to welcome any advance there from the Husband.

### ***Third series – Throwing lifts***

The last series of lifts confirms her progression. To conclude the *pas de deux*, a set of three lifts, performed on the diagonal from upstage right to downstage left, renders the unambiguously sexual appeal developed between Husband and Girl. The Girl's movements are quite revealing. She confidently propels her body forwards in his direction as she jumps, as evidence of her frank desire for an intimate contact with him. He, for his part, instigates her action by opening his

arms and then welcomes her body in them with a close embrace. They perform this lift thrice before the Mother intervenes and the Girl rushes off the stage. The erotic undertone of the lift is reinforced by the links it possesses with the duets between Husband and Wife. In those, the Wife insistently tries but invariably fails to elicit any interest from the Husband with a similar movement of throwing her body into his arms, which he always rejects with coldness (as in the Goya-inspired pose in No. 6) and even with rudeness (as in one of her last implorations to him in No. 12). When the Girl finishes her duet with these lifts, the choreographic material suggests that her feelings have moved beyond her initial romantic inclinations. In contrast to the start of the *pas de deux*, where the movements evolved from the kinetic imagery of the Girl/Boy duets, the ending draws from the duets of the adult couple. Narratively, this progression suggests that the story is developing towards more carnal territories.

### ***Music***

While the narrative information that arises from the choreography of the Husband/Girl duet mainly focuses on the strong emotions of the characters, the connotations embedded in the music add important nuances to their story. After a timid start where the waltz is only mildly insinuated by the violoncello, the viola and the mute horns in the background, the music soon becomes the guiding motor of the Husband and the Girl's waltzing steps. It progressively grows into a vertiginous force, with faster pace, heavier instrumentation and stronger dynamics, thus matching the dizziness experienced by the characters, particularly the Girl. Although the music will later briefly move in a different direction, it firmly stays in the melodic and rhythmic patterns of the waltz in these initial passages,



unlike the dance, which at this moment moves from waltz to ballet to mark the shift from external events to internal feelings. By keeping the formal characteristics of the waltz longer than the dance, the music maintains a direct reference to the dancing context in which the action takes place while also collaborates in the delineation of feelings with an increase in speed, instrumentation and dynamics. The score thus retains a diegetic status for the music even if, additionally, it also contributes to the depiction of the inner experience of the characters. This dual function is, however, abandoned twice in the duet. On both occasions, the music acquires a prominent role in the narration of the story by becoming temporarily non-diegetic and contradicting, with powerful determination, the information arising from the dance. In the first instance, a cuddle of the dancing couple is covered by a sudden burst of energy and melodic assonance that cancels any positive association suggested by the action onstage. On the second occasion, the pattern of increasing dizziness in the waltz turns into a turbulent series of dissonant chords played *fortissimo* by the full orchestra, percussion included. The emphatic, strident chain of melodic and dynamic accents coincides with the series of 'throwing' lifts that close the dance sequence, permeating thus their sexual connotations with a sombre veil of impending disaster. The deliberate clash between music and dance in this passage delivers twofold narrative information. On one hand, it narrates the progression in the Husband/Girl relationship while, on the other hand, it presages its appalling ending. As the main narrative strategy at the end of the number, this simultaneous delivery of information exploits the confluence of different semiotic channels in danced narratives to send a multi-layered set of signs with cues that refer both to

the present action onstage (including external events and internal emotions) and to the future progression of the story.

### ***Pas de deux in No. 15 – Rape***

The denouement of the Husband/Girl relationship takes place in the last *pas de deux* of the couple, in No. 15. After their passionate waltz, the expected outcome of their mutual attraction, a sexual encounter, finally happens in this number. Yet it has a twisted, violent shape that finally confirms the presage of tragedy introduced at the beginning and sustained throughout the story. To illustrate the skillful construction of suspense leading to this culmination, it is worth pausing for a moment to introduce the conceptualization of suspense in narrative theory.

Drama scholar Manfred Pfister (1988) considers that there are several factors that contribute to create suspense in theatrical narratives: the individual level of attention, the reception context, the external conditions of the performance, the indicators embedded in the text itself, etc. (98). As a premise, he clarifies that the suspense potential can only be present when the characters and/or the spectators are only partly aware of what might happen next. Suspense cannot occur if there is complete awareness of the ensuing plot sequences nor if the fictional future is left completely open and unpredictable. Suspense always depends on the existence of an element of tension between complete unawareness on the one hand and a certain level of anticipatory expectation based on certain given information on the other (98).

Concentrating on the factors of suspense related to the text itself, Pfister proposes several parameters to identify it. A first factor is the identification of the audience

with the character protagonist of the ensuing plot sequences (99). The degree of empathy can be determined by the preceding events in the plot. For instance, a relatively lengthy introduction showing the social milieu of the characters can establish a certain level of identification of the audience with the problems, fears, hopes and the other intimate details of the private lives of the central characters (99).

The plot sequences also might help to build suspense potential, which increases in proportion to the amount of risk involved in the action presented in the story. Risk of the characters' lives is possibly the highest potential for suspense (99). The informational value of the ensuing plot sequence is also a significant parameter. The less probability there is of an event taking place, the higher its informational value will be. The suspense potential stands in inverse proportion to the probability of an event actually taking place (101). The interplay of several arcs of suspense in the plot might also contribute to the audience's expectations. Long-term suspense arches over the structure of the whole text, whereas short-term suspense merely embraces shorter plot sequences on an individual basis (101).

A further influence on the intensity of the suspense potential is the quantity and clarity of the future-orientated information which both characters and audience are able to use to develop their respective anticipatory hypotheses (100). Such future-orientated information is transmitted explicitly in the open discussion of plans, dreams, atmospheric omens, etc. The mere passing of time constantly stimulates new hypotheses as to the chances of a successful completion of the narrative journey. Conversely, suspense potential cannot be developed when there is little or no future-orientated information, even if the author introduces the most

drastic shock effects. Sensationalist melodramas are examples of this negative element, in which the completely unpredictable may produce isolated moments of surprise but not suspense (100).

A first factor for suspense in *The Invitation* comes from the intersection of the two main plotlines. The order of events in the plot and the place that two sexual encounters have in that temporal chain are very revealing of the role that the first consummation plays in building the suspense for the second. The sequence of events is as follows: the Husband/Girl waltz in No. 10 raises the erotic tension of the ballet; the following Carnival interlude (in Nos. 11 and 12) expands it by overtly introducing the theme of copulation in the story; No. 13 fulfils the erotic expectations and presents a sexual encounter but, significantly, the encounter is not between the Husband and the Girl, whose storyline was the last onstage before the interruption of the interlude, but between the Wife and the Boy. Thus, the Wife/Boy intercourse represents a first climax in the story, fulfilling the expectations created in the chain of events narrated in numbers 10, 11 and 12, and temporarily holding the denouement of the Husband/Girl infatuation. Number 14, after the Wife/Boy meeting, raises the expectations of a Husband/Girl encounter again. In this short episode, the adult guests, including the Girl's two elder sisters, furtively form pairs and disappear into dark corners.

After that sexually-charged series of events in the plot, the Husband and the Girl meet in No. 15. Because of the place the meeting has in the plot, the expectations partially point at a highly erotic meeting, surpassing the temperature of the preceding Wife/Boy encounter. The earlier waltz that exposed the strong desires emerging between the two characters made a suggestion in that direction too.

However, the rape represents a departure from the plot patterns delineated so far. While it retains the sexual content prevailing in the preceding numbers, it reverses the form and the outcome. Its informational value is thus high. In addition, the deviation from the predictable ending is not entirely unexpected for the audience. Other factors of suspense have already hinted at the element of violence that transforms the story of the Girl's sexual awakening into a tragedy. A set of diverse foreshadowing cues scattered across the ballet have progressively contributed to build the partial awareness of the audience of a terrible event pending in the story. As discussed in chapter four, the future-orientated information comes from different stage elements, chiefly the musical cues. They are the clearest and most persistent indicators of the ending, since not only do they open the ballet with a passage that creates a disturbing atmosphere but also send, later, frequent warning assonances whenever an action onstage brings the Girl closer to her fate. The proximity of the Husband is particularly emphasized aurally, his actions thus constantly presented as a risk to the naïve Girl.

The identification of the audience with the Girl is also a potent element for suspense. As the leading character in the story, the plot contains events related to her upbringing, to her family and friends, and to her adolescent nature. Her innocence in confronting her puberty and her romantic aspirations are particularly emphasized in the games in the garden and in her duets with the Boy. All these positive, vulnerable aspects of the character gain the empathy of the audience and, because they are presented as subject to an uncertain risk, they contribute to create the suspense that makes the audience look forward with anticipation to the ensuing plot sequences.

The *pas de deux* in No. 15 resolves the suspense crafted with all these indicators. It unfolds the act that confirms the bad omens. And once the audience is fully aware of the type of crime so insistently anticipated, the narrative focus shifts towards the nature and effects of that denouement. The attention of the audience, so intensely sustained with suspense strategies this far, is then maintained through two additional strategies that still foster the empathy of the audience with the Girl. Firstly, the rape is explicitly enacted onstage so that the audience is not spared the brutality of the act. And secondly, the ballet does not end with this scene but with a long coda that expands the details of the destruction of the Girl's innocence. The interest awakened and kept with the markers of suspense turns now towards the factors that magnify the event that has driven and will drive the narrative progression of the story until its ending.

## 6.6 Recapitulation

The analysis of the *pas de deux* suggested in this chapter has exposed some of MacMillan's narrative strategies in *The Invitation*. A first significant choreographic choice is the use of highly expressive small gestures. They play a prominent role in the passages inspired in Colette, in particular. Both the Girl/Boy *pas de deux* and the Wife/Boy duet contain frequent examples where Colette's body imagery is translated into gestures and dance vocabulary whose concise, connotative power concentrates a high degree of narrative information. In choreographic terms, this strategy, possibly inspired by Antony Tudor, is combined with other options for modelling the story. A strong contrast in the dancing qualities of the Girl/Boy duets

and the Wife/Husband *pas de deux* kinetically renders the different type of rapport existing in each couple. A signature sequence for the adult couple furthers the composition of the Husband/Wife relationship, providing a powerful description of their rigid, unhappy marriage and, additionally, framing their coexistence within the mores of the social context of the storyworld. More notably, the lifts that, with different forms and shapes, are inserted in the choreography of all six *pas de deux* of the ballet possess a symbolism that fulfils several narrative functions. On the one hand, the lifts are a central element in the kinetic imagery of the ballet, with a connotative power that evolves and becomes richer as the ballet progresses. On the other hand, they provide unity among the four relationships developed in the story by allowing a web of cohesive ties among them that highlight their similarities and, by contrast, their differences. Some musical passages have a similar cohesive and rhetorical role. They recurrently reappear in the score as leitmotifs, recalling in each new appearance the incidents narrated in the previous instances. The best examples are the 'romantic' melody, present in the most loving moments of the Boy/Girl and Wife/Boy duets, and the waltz, which frames the ball and introduces the two sexual encounters.

As a source of inspiration for the *pas de deux*, the film *The House of the Angel* has a role as major as Colette's novella. With direct influence in the duets for the Husband/Girl, the cinematic technique of alternation between long and close shots is replicated in the sequence of events in No. 9 and 10, where the multi-action scene leads to the exclusive attention to the couple in their first *pas de deux*. Moreover, a complex combination of cues in this duet, with the dancing alternating between the description of external events and internal emotions, and the music fluctuating between diegetic and non-diegetic passages that mainly send warning

signs about the events to come in the plot, constitute a powerful dance equivalent of the ball sequence in the film.

In terms of plot, the parallel journey of the Girl and the Boy in the story has important implications for the configuration and understanding of the two plotlines. The metonymical plot development of the Wife/Boy's affair benefits from the precedence and more detailed account of the Husband/Girl's flirtation. Conversely, the consummation of the shorter liaison prepares the ground for the powerful effect of the longer one's denouement, which is the climax of the whole ballet. The role of the former in building the suspense for the last duet of the ballet is reinforced by other indicators, such as the powerful identification of the audience with the Girl and the frequent foreshadowing cues that presage the forceful ending.





## CHAPTER 7: CHARACTERS: CONCEPTION, CHARACTERIZATION AND DANCERS' CONTRIBUTION. THE *SOLOS*

### 7.1 Introduction

The fourth defining principle in the notion of narrative that I introduced at the beginning of this thesis, in chapter two, refers to the necessary presence of a 'qualia' in the storyworld; that is, to the existence of 'a felt, subjective awareness of real or imagined consciousness undergoing the disruptive experience' narrated in the temporal sequence of events in the plot (Herman, 2007c: 280). In dance, I argued (following Monika Fludernik's argument for drama and Edward Nye's claim for the *ballet d'action*), characters on stage qualify for that 'qualia'. They are 'agents that perceive, think, feel and perform actions and they are perceived as being located in a specific space and time that resemble the human experience of space and time' (Fludernik, 2008: 360). This chapter refers to this indispensable constituent of the narrative. The characters of *The Invitation*, agents, participants and experiencers of the events analysed in the previous chapters, will here receive full attention. I will analyse aspects of their conception, such as their features, their trajectory in the story and the depth of their portrayal. I will also examine their characterization through the components of dance, and, ultimately, through the particular performance of the interpreters. And I will include frequent references to their role in the plot, examining the mutual interdependence of plot and characters highlighted earlier<sup>1</sup>. Before the analysis, however, I provide, in the following paragraphs, the additional theoretical background that supports my reflections.

Characters can be defined as ‘human or human-like entities that play a role in a narrative fiction’ (Margolin, 2007: 66). They exist and participate in a certain storyworld and have a certain set of properties that individualizes them. When attempting to analyse them it is possible to explore issues such as their existence (does the character exist in the storyworld, in the imagination of another character, in a secondary embedded world?), name (is it a proper name, a pronoun or a definite description?) and identity (what are the physical, behavioural, communicative, mental -perceptual, emotive, volitional, and cognitive- features that allow their individualization?) (Margolin, 2007: 72). Furthermore, it is possible to look more closely at their evolution during the story, investigating how their properties persist or change during the storyworld time (are they static or dynamic characters? Do their central psychological features undergo major changes in the storyworld time?) (Margolin, 2007: 73). The number and quality of their features also allow for the distinction between flat and round characters (or mono- and multi-dimensional) (Pfister, 1988: 178). The former are defined by a small set of distinguishing features whereas the latter are delineated by a complex set of features taken from different levels (biographical background, psychological disposition, interpersonal behaviour, etc.) (Pfister, 1988: 178).

Besides existence, name and identity, characters also possess a place in the storyworld. They participate in the action and can be classified in categories that explain their affinities and differences. Different aspects can be significant for this categorization, such as biological (gender, age), cultural (ethnic), social (class, profession, marital status), actional or psychological (Margolin: 2007: 75). In addition to these qualitative correspondences and contrasts among characters, there can be quantitative relations of dominance among them (Pfister, 1988: 165).

Depending on the length of time that characters spend on stage and the extent of their participation, there are major figures<sup>2</sup>, minor figures, supporting figures, episodic figures, etc. (Pfister, 1988: 166).

The configuration of a character within the infinite range of possibilities only succinctly outlined above depends on the choices the author<sup>3</sup> makes when creating the storyworld. A character is in fact an artifice, an artistic product fashioned forth in some artistic-historical context (Margolin, 2007: 70). The selection of properties is necessarily incomplete and that is why some characters are rounded while others are merely schematically defined. In some cases, only a few physical details are known whereas in others access to their minds is granted (Margolin, 2007: 68). Sometimes, authors opt for drawing from an artistic tradition with well-known fixed types, adding some individual variations to the limited set of properties they already possess (Margolin, 2007: 70). This wide range of creative possibilities allows for enquiry about why, and to what end, authors endow their characters with a particular selection of features and not others (Margolin, 2007: 68). On the other hand, the analysis of how they convey the information about them exposes the formal techniques of characterization (Pfister, 1988: 176). The information used to delineate a character can be transmitted by the characters themselves, either explicitly (with a self-commentary, for instance) or implicitly (through their appearance, behaviour, clothing, properties, etc.). It can also be embedded in different aspects of the narrative, such as the characters' name, their contrasts and correspondences with other characters, the way they confront a situation or address a theme or another character, etc. (Pfister, 1988: 183-195).

In addition to the creative intervention of the author, in the performing arts, the physical body of the actors or the dancers and their unique interpretation of the role also play an important role in the delineation of a character. It adds an 'enacted' dimension to the characterization (Richardson, 2007: 143) that, in the case of dance, depends on a set of physical, technical and acting abilities. Many factors are relevant for the analysis of the dancers' contribution to their particular representation of characters, such as their training, their way of preparing for the role, their participation (or not) during the creative process, their dancing style, their acting skills, etc.

## **7.2 General Aspects**

*The Invitation* has a cast of thirty two characters. Four of them are major characters (Girl, Boy, Husband and Wife), four are minor (Mother, Governess and two Elder Sisters), three are episodic (Hen and two Cockerels) and the rest are supporting characters (Children, Guests and Acrobats and Entertainers<sup>4</sup>). The four major characters are, in different degrees, well-defined, round, dynamic characters, their individuality arising from a conjunction of physical, psychological and emotional features. By contrast, the minor characters are quite mono-dimensional, delineated by a few features and with a minimal trajectory within the story. Some of the supporting characters in the groups of Children and Guests have a certain degree of individualization (i.e. the girl who is mean with her friends and is unloved by her parents). The meagre characterization of the supporting characters is, however, enough to allow the two groups (Children and Guests) to function as integral parts of the story, not as mere ornaments placed in the stage

for the visual effect, as it was frequent in the practice of accumulating dancers on the borders of the stage for decorative purposes in nineteenth-century ballets. Finally, the three episodic characters and the group of acrobats to which they belong have a very limited characterization, defined only by the one trait that is necessary for their function in the story. Both in the diegetic and hypodiegetic levels in which they act, their sexual behaviour is the only feature presented to the audience.

### ***Name***

Within this constellation<sup>5</sup> of characters, several shared and contrasting attributes emerge. Firstly, none of the characters has a proper name but a name that refers to a certain feature of their identity, mainly related to their place in the storyworld. The name of the Girl highlights her tender age, a trait that she shares with the Boy. By contrast, the older couple is identified by the marital status, Wife and Husband. The centrality of the Girl in the story emerges, among other indicators, from the name of some of the minor characters, which describes their relation with her: Mother, two Sisters and Governess. Even the Boy is linked to her by a family bond, for the programme notes identify him as her Cousin. The absence of a proper name for the central characters of the ballet is a usual strategy in Kenneth MacMillan's repertory, especially in those ballets of his own invention or with a literary source that is not very familiar to the audience. Before *The Invitation*, he did not assign a proper name to his characters in *House of Birds* (1955), *Solitaire* (1956), *The Burrow* (1958) and *Le Baiser de la Fée* (1960), to name just a few, and after *The Invitation*, he did the same in *Las Hermanas* (1963), *Playground* (1979) and *The Judas Tree* (1992), for instance. Since, in dance, the only way to provide characters

with proper names is to use linguistic cues, usually in the programme notes, MacMillan's preference for names that convey very little narrative information about the characters places all the emphasis of their characterization on the information coming from the stage. In the case of *The Invitation*, the strategy also helps him to hide the literary antecedents of the ballet and to avoid a difficult choice between the two novels for the name of the merged characters (Ana or Vinca for the Girl? Phil or Julián for the Boy?).

### ***Upper Class***

Secondly, in addition to a name expressed with a general, little illustrative noun, all the characters of *The Invitation*, with the probable exception of the Governess and the Acrobats, belong to the same social class. Their upper class origins, which are evident in their costumes, in their very formal manners and in the leisure activities in which they participate, locate the story in a specific social stratum. The individuality of each character is shaped within a common backdrop of values, social mores and customs, allowing the ballet to offer a picture of a specific segment of society. The shared upper class background is reinforced by the family bond linking many of the characters in the story. The power of society and family to shape the fate of individuals, which is a recurrent topic in MacMillan's repertory (*Las Hermanas* (1963), *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) and *Mayerling* (1978) are the most salient examples), is emphasized through characterization by the common set of values assigned to the social units (family and friends) portrayed in the ballet.

### ***Old vs Young***

Within that group of upper-class characters, the ballet establishes a stark contrast between young and old characters. Two central characters and a group of

secondary characters align in each generational side: Boy, Girl and Children, on the one hand, and Wife, Husband and Guests, on the other. Stylistically, the contrast is reflected in many aspects of the ballet, such as different movement qualities for the introductory duets of the two central couples; shorter, livelier and flimsier costumes for the youngsters; heavier music melodies for the elders; different places of interaction (the garden for the Children, the house for the adults), etc. Thematically, this division reflects the topic of sexual initiation at the heart of the story, which in relation to the young characters is delineated as the passage from one group to the other. The plot reflects this contrast, too, with the introduction of the group of Children earlier than the group of Adults and the selection of a couple from each group before the presentation of the two intergenerational affairs that trigger the transit. Finally, in connection with the common social background of the characters, the old/young contrast also emphasizes the responsibility of the old generation for the values passed on to the younger.

### ***Male vs Female***

Another important organizing principle of the characters of *The Invitation* is that of gender. Male and female characters present a number of significant differences. Quantitatively, women dominate over men not only in the number of characters but also in the length of discourse time devoted exclusively to them. Despite the parity in the four major characters (two male, two female), all minor characters are female (Governess, Mother, and two Sisters; no Father or Brothers). The two leading female characters (Girl and Wife) accumulate more exclusive time on stage than their male counterparts (Boy and Husband). Both the Girl and the Wife have two solos in the ballet (in numbers two and eight, the former, and in numbers ten



and thirteen, the latter), a temporal attention that the Boy and the Husband never enjoy. Qualitatively, this dominance is reflected in the greater depth and length<sup>6</sup> of the female characters. Although aspects of the psychological and emotional life of the four central characters are provided, the portrait is more complete in the case of the Girl and the Wife. The Girl's psychological damage and the Wife's unhappiness in her marriage are explored with a detail never granted to the Boy's vulnerability or the Husband's late feeling of guilt. The Boy shares many of the features of the Girl and has a similar trajectory in the ballet, yet his characterization is achieved with more economy of means. The Husband's evolution in the story is minimal. Of the four major characters, he is the one who, at the end of the ballet, has undergone the smallest process of change. Finally, the male/female contrast is reflected in the plot of the ballet, with the dominance of the Girl's storyline over the Boy's. The climax of the story and its end concentrate on the Girl's experience.

### ***Sexuality***

All the characters of the ballet share a common trait. Their conception, whether multi- or mono-dimensional, always includes a reference to their sexual views or behaviours. Sexuality, the central theme in the ballet, is an essential element in the configuration of characters. In some way or the other, all characters reflect an aspect of the topic. There is lack of experience and curiosity in the Girl and Boy, juvenile promiscuity in the Sisters, and different degrees of maturity in the rest of the Children. In the adults, the Governess and the Mother are the guardians of sexual rectitude, the Wife yearns for a satisfactory sexual life, the Husband has a philandering nature and violent habits, and the rest of the Guests, despite their

façade of good manners, participate with enthusiasm in the bacchanalian end of the party. The pervasive characteristic of sexuality is even present in the mono-dimensional, episodic *Acrobats*. Their sexual behaviour is the only feature in their characterization.

### ***In isolation – Conception and ‘Enacted’ Dimension***

Beyond this common trait, the individual conception and characterization<sup>7</sup> of each figure comprises a different set of features and techniques. To model his characters, MacMillan drew generously from the literary and film sources of the ballet but, as he declared in an interview of that time, he aimed to infuse a sense of reality in them: ‘I made the characters people I know, not the characters in the books’ (quoted in Brinson, 1960a: 9). To achieve this result of round, believable characters that the audience could feel to be truthful, MacMillan delineated their physical, psychological and emotional features through a variety of stage elements and, in addition, put special care in choosing dancers that would be adequate for those roles. The enacted dimension of the characters, that is, that which arises from the particular contribution of the performer, played thus an important role in their final conception. MacMillan intensely worked with his first cast in the studio, considering the dancers as his collaborators, ‘not a piece of clay’ (MacMillan quoted in Brinson, 1960a: 9). He tried to cast ‘dancers with something in their own personalities that might be in [the] story or theme’ (quoted in Brinson, 1960a: 9). According to the dancers who worked with MacMillan, he was particularly gifted at bringing out the features of a given character from them (Boulton, 2002 and Heaton, 2002). He did not give many clues about the story or the characters in the rehearsals (Heaton, 2002 and Mason, 2002), but did encourage them to use their

personal experience or imagination to find the essence of the characters (Seymour, 2002). MacMillan disliked artificiality and lack of 'individuality' in performance (MacLeary, 2002 and Mason, 2002) and the acting skills of the dancers were of paramount importance for him. Marion Tait, who danced the role of the Girl in *The Invitation* in the 1970s and was coached by MacMillan himself, acknowledges that she learnt from him the importance of the dramatic aspects of her dancing (in Wake, 2003). In a MacMillan ballet, she recalls, playing a role is not merely dancing but telling a story that needs to look unfeigned to the audience. In addition to dance technique, there needs to be honest and powerful acting (in Wake 2003). And for MacMillan, the whole body was at the service of characterization (in Brinson, 1960a: 9). Heaton recalls his praise for the expressivity of her eyes, and Seymour remembers his suggestions for the expressive use of her face, hands and feet (2002). The four central characters of *The Invitation* belong to this way of crafting round, dynamic dramatic characters.

### **7.3 The Girl**

The Girl is the most complex and detailed character in the story. Her coming-of-age trajectory, structurally central to the plot of the ballet, is unfolded with detail, from a playful, trusting and innocent child-adolescent at the ballet's beginning, to a damaged young woman, lost in her own sorrow, at its end. Although she belongs to Guido's story, some of her features come from Colette's novella. She is as perceptive, youthful and assertive as Vinca but has Ana's rigid upbringing. Her personality is modelled in many levels (physical, psychological, emotional) and is conveyed to the audience through a wide range of musical, visual and kinetic cues.

Her solos (chiefly in Nos. 2, 9, 16) expose much of her nature but her interaction with other characters, especially the Boy and the Husband, is equally revealing of her character.

### ***Solo in No. 2***

The Girl's presentation in the story, in No. 2, just after the introduction of her Mother's prudishness and strictness with her two elder Sisters, evidences her carefree, youthful spirit. She enters onstage zigzagging, 'her arms outstretched like an aeroplane... or like "falling out of a tree", as the note in the piano score reads' (Seymour in Crickmay, 1980: 71). After this entrance, the Girl's opening dance phrases contain much of the movement material that defines her character. Her arm movements are free, unrestricted by the demands of classroom positions, and the steps she performs flow into each other, giving an impression of fluency (Morris, 2006: 136). Her floor patterns are restless, as she moves back and forth, and her body gracefully ripples and tilts (Morris, 2002: 93). Her wanderings onstage are peppered with small jumps, off-balance turns, short *relevés* and brief *arabesques* that project her body into the space around her in all directions, suggesting the active, joyful amusement of a lively child in a garden. Her costume in this solo, in white with smudges of sunny bright yellow, matches the luminosity irradiated by her movements. When she dispenses with her ample straw hat, she disregards tidiness in favour of comfort, another sign of her careless young age.

Musically, her entrance is saluted by the 'youthful' melody, the sweet tune played on the flute to highlight the innocence of youth in the ballet (see Musical Example 1 Appendix 2). Yet, the melody is not entirely transparent during the Girl's solo. It is underlined by an edgy, anxious accompaniment of the violins which, although

subtle, clouds the introduction of the Girl with a discreet warning about her future. While the choreography, design and the main flute melody unequivocally point to her youthful personality, the strings suggest a shadow cast over it. Only when the Boy enters onstage and both characters start their duet, does the melody become free from that unsettling base, with the violins enhancing its hopeful tone.

### ***Rapport with Men – Sexual Experience***

The duets with the Boy provide more descriptive details about the Girl's character. A mixture of girl and young woman, she plays with the Boy with freedom and camaraderie but also learns to be responsive to his flirtatious advances. In the awakening to new sensations which they both experience, she is initially hesitant but becomes assertive, imposing her own, slower pace. With confidence in her own instincts, she accepts the exploration of sensuality that the Boy proposes. The Girl's rapport with the Husband, by contrast, exposes her immaturity. She is absolutely infatuated by his presence but lacks the experience and the right education to handle her attraction to him. Except at the end, she accepts his advances, aware that they might take her to unknown territories where she is not completely confident. Her mixture of attraction and insecurity is revealed in her frequent doubts about how to proceed with him. She is often intimidated by his presence (see Picture 41 and Picture 42 in Appendix 1) and frequently has second thoughts about her behaviour with him (after she dances for him in No. 8; at the end of their waltz in No. 10, when she rushes to exit; and in No. 15, when she is initially reticent to dance with him again). On the other hand, she is delighted to attract his attention, as in Nos. 7 and 8 (see Picture 6 in Appendix 1), and that fascination prevents her from perceiving the danger he poses to her, even if she witnesses the

violent quarrel he has with his Wife in No. 6. So perceptive with the Boy, she is too naïve with the Husband. Her immaturity makes her an easy prey for his violent lust.

The Girl's relationships with the Boy and the Husband are part of the process of the sexual awakening that she undergoes in the ballet. Her journey is long, from her innocent blushes during the game of the statues in No. 3 through to her awareness, too late, of the Husband's real intentions in No. 15 and to her deflowering immediately afterwards. Yet the transformation is gradual, her blossoming progressively unfolded in the story. Several choreographic motives illustrate her trajectory of discovery, chiefly, the shoulder lifts which she tentatively performs with the Boy for the first time in No. 5 and which she later so easily and fearlessly executes with the Husband in No. 10. A notable mid-point in her ripening is the moment in which she starts to become aware of her seductive power and uses it to flirt with the Husband. The brief solo that she dances for him in No. 8 contains movement material and choreographic details that, developing her first solo in No. 2 in a very subtle way, show her evolution.

### ***Solo in No. 8***

The choreography for this solo still makes the Girl seem very childish but with an incipient sensuality that is already visible. The floor patterns are as restless and as erratic as in her first solo but contain more clear diagonals and circles, as if some discipline has finally started to lessen her spontaneity. Her arms are still fluent and free but now occasionally include the use of flirtatious shoulders. The position of the head becomes decidedly coquettish, bent backwards in the turns and slightly inclined in the traveling steps. Her gaze is always directed towards the Husband

with the deliberate intention of attracting his attention, a purpose that differs from the tone in the glances of comradeship exchanged earlier with the Boy. There is also more energy and abandonment in the way her body invades the air in the small *grand jetés* she performs, as if she finds a new, luxuriant delight in the movement. And to these kinetic cues, music and design add a few nuances confirming the slight change in the Girl. Her costume is still white but the spots splashed over it are no longer yellow but blue. The music is decidedly playful, anchoring the scene in the not so distant childhood while evoking, at the same time, the excitement of the seduction.

### ***Emotional and Psychological Traits***

This passage of the Girl into adulthood and the changes that it triggers in her personality are explored with a depth that goes beyond the physical details. An important part of her characterization aims at exposing the emotional and psychological side of her progression. In addition to her solos and her *pas de deux* with the Husband and the Boy, where details about her feelings are delineated either through her presentation in isolation or through her interaction with the other two characters, there are several moments scattered across the ballet where the main focus is to provide an insight into her interiority<sup>8</sup>. These flashes into her mind and soul vary in length and choreographic shape, ranging from brief gestures to lengthier dance sequences. Within this variety, there is one instance in the ballet where the subjectivity of the Girl receives special emphasis. The Girl's interior state is unhurriedly unfolded, taking enough discourse time for the audience to notice and reflect on it. The passage is placed at the end of the story, when the

psychological insight into the Girl's state of mind after the rape acquires central narrative attention.

### ***Bewildered, Erratic Walk***

Closing the story, a long sequence of steps combines gestures with spatial imagery, erratic floor patterns and evocative music to reveal the extent of the Girl's psychological damage. The physical location of the action is the garden and the only props there, the statues, propitiate the Girl's recollection of the tragic events of the day. When she sees them again and recalls the episode with her friends, when she blushed in front of their nude appearance, she becomes poignantly aware of the loss of her innocence. The symbolic connotations attached to the props allow a link between these two distant episodes in the plot.

The way the Girl moves among these allegorical statues in the new, shattered self that emerges from the rape is another spatial indicative of her physical and psychological wounds. Her state of bewilderment and long-lasting damage are chiefly expressed through a few staggering steps while her arms and hands make movements that revive her drama<sup>9</sup>. Her arms have become a shield helping her to avoid any physical contact with the rest of the characters. She already used them to elude the Husband in the aftermath of the rape and to dispatch the Boy after his kiss in the preceding episode. In these closing moments, they allow her now to move cautiously, keeping a protective distance from anything else or pointing at the back of the stage (from where her rapist abandoned the scene) with rage and apprehension (see Picture 45 in Appendix 1). Additionally, they make very expressive gestures, energetically rejecting the suggestion of sex emanating from the statues or, more distressingly, articulating the Girl's aversion to her own



harmful belly. In their last position, they rest in front of her body, embraced by her hands, in a sign of withdrawal to her own thoughts.

The Girl's floor patterns during these closing moments give similar evidence of her confusion and isolation. She wobbles slowly from one side of the stage to the other, then, to the back and, finally, to the front. She ends the ballet facing the audience, alone, and lost in her thoughts. Her wandering movements mirror the confusion of her mind, attempting to make sense of her experience. She finds no comfort in any of the directions where she moves so finally chooses the front, an option that none of the other characters has taken. The married couple exited from the back right part of the stage; the Boy, from the back left; and the guests from both sides. Her staggering to the front is indicative of her alienation. She walks towards a future of isolation, emotionally and physically away from her family and friends, who will resume their lives in the opposite direction.

Aurally, the music contributes to the portrayal of the Girl's mind with a closing passage that, in slow tempo and low dynamics and instrumentation, contains brief fragments of the main leitmotifs in the ballet. The recollection of these melodies, which by now already incorporate rich semantic connotations about the story, intermittently burst through the score, as if the Girl is reviving, in a disorderly way, the events of the day in her memory. This combination of slow-paced movements with richly evocative music that seem to echo the character's mind is a typically MacMillanesque narrative strategy, which he would later use, for instance, in his *Romeo and Juliet* (1965), when Prokofiev's score voices Juliet's thoughts while she is pondering her future with the bottle of Friar Lawrence's potion in her hands.

### ***Lynn Seymour***

Many of the details in the complex and rich characterization of the Girl owe their presence in the ballet to the participation of dancer Lynn Seymour. As the first interpreter of the character, Seymour provided many of her distinctive features, since MacMillan drew from several aspects of her training, technique and talents to characterize the main role of his ballet. He exploited her early tap training to construct the unusual, quirky rhythmic features of her dancing sequences (especially those portraying the Girl's childish nature) and he based the choreography for her solos and duets on her fluency and expressiveness (Morris, 2002: 91). He did not give her many details of the arms and upper body movement, trusting her to provide interesting and expressive features (Morris, 2002: 91). He relied on her acting skills to extract the most of the many intense dramatic moments of the story, a freedom that she used to incorporate diverse acting strategies into her dancing. Perhaps the two examples that best illustrates Seymour's input into the Girl's characterization are two strategies that provide a psychological insight into the Girl's experience, the 'young feet' and the 'silent scream', discussed in the following paragraphs.

### ***Young Feet***

Companions to the 'bewildered walk' in denoting the Girl's emotional state, the 'young feet' are located a bit earlier in the ballet, in No. 9. They therefore refer to her pre-rape emotional state and express the Girl's insecurity in coping with the attention that she is receiving from the Husband. While he, at a certain distance, observes her stillness and considers asking her to dance, she remains in a corner of the stage, downstage right, doubtful about her previous actions (her solo for him)

and unsure about how to proceed next. Her meditations last a long minute and a half and are mainly expressed through minimal gestures while she stands on the same spot, nervously jiggling. Although the music voices twice the Girl's agitation with a frantic melody in the flute briefly inserted within the dominant, heavy tune that describes the Husband's intentions, the main dramatic device at this moment is the expressive use of feet, hands and head. Seymour made her feet slowly wobble, while her hands try but fail to find the right occupation, smoothing her dress down several times and, restlessly and intermittently, reposing in front of her body and at her back. During these indecisive movements, her head is always down except for sending a few furtive, quick and timid glances towards the Husband. Seymour recalls that Nicholas Georgiadis, MacMillan and she went to the Royal Court Theatre to see Eugène Ionesco's play *The Chairs* (1952) and were all fascinated with Joan Plowright's interpretation of a very old woman. One of the interpretative strategies that she used in order to convey the character's old age was the expressive use of feet, in carpet slippers. The way her feet moved inspired Seymour to borrow the acting resource and to invert it to create 'young feet' for the Girl. The most appropriate time for this interpretative strategy was this very long dramatic moment when, in combination with hands and head, the feet embody the Girl's vacillations with a nervous, shy jiggling (in Crickmay, 1980: 72).

### ***Silent Scream***

In addition to plays, Seymour had an avid curiosity for other forms of art, such as novels and films, which she considered an important help in the exploration of dramatic ways for dance to represent a character (Seymour et al., 1984: 107 and 123). In the case of *The Invitation*, along with rehearsals in the studio with

MacMillan, she prepared for the role of the Girl by reading Guido's novel and by watching the two films on which the ballet is based (Seymour in Crickmay, 1980: 72). This preparatory work might have been the inspiration for the second significant dramatic moment in her interpretation of the Girl, the 'silent scream', which expresses the Girl's first realization of the immense damage caused to her by the Husband after the rape. It is a grieving lament that has a sequel at the beginning of the flowing number, the last in the ballet. This repeated 'silent scream' probably has its origins in two gestures in Beatriz Guido's novel, a soundless yell and a tight teeth gritting, which are also present in Eduardo Torre Nilsson's film.

The scream in silence is, in the novel, inserted in the rape scene:

'I was paralyzed before him. I could not move or turn around. And then it was too late. For an hour I tried to defend myself. However, I could not scream. I never once thought of crying out. I defended myself desperately, aware of my defeat in advance . . .

I rolled over the carpet. I hid behind the solid baroque legs of the bed, under the embroidered quilt . . . I heard the yellowish picture frames falling down and breaking . . . And then I could finally scream, but silently.

It was a scream of pain, of hate and pride. I could hardly get up. He stayed there, lying on the carpet. I opened the door and closed it without looking back. I slowly walked back to my bedroom, went to bed and waited.

Guido, 2008: 117

The soundless shriek follows immediately afterwards:

At four o'clock, I heard some steps going down the stairs and then those same steps walking across the fallen leaves of the park. I gritted my teeth to reinforce my desire: his death'.

Guido, 2008: 117

In the film, the scream in silence is a highly expressive gesture, performed with a stifled sigh that Ana lets out while she folds her arms, with clenched fists, around

her nightgown as soon as she realizes Pablo Aguirre's real intentions. The useless protective gesture and the open mouth end with a forceful kiss by Aguirre. After the rape, consummated off screen, Ana is back in her bed and an oblique close-up shows her gesture of gritting her teeth while her voice-over says the same lines as in the novel, 'I gritted my teeth to reinforce my utmost desire: his death'. Since both are silent gestures, they could have borrowed them in exactly the same shape for the ballet but, instead, Seymour translated them into dance vocabulary, enlarging their duration and dramatic intensity. She also slightly changed their narrative time in the story, postponing their appearance to the aftermath of the rape in both cases. They were thus relocated within the repertory of narrative cues related to the Girl's perception of her severe psychological damage.

The exact moment for this dramatic dance passage is at the end of No. 15, once the Husband exits and leaves the Girl alone. As soon as she manages to stand up, she emphatically goes up *en pointe* with her arms pressing down the air with open hands and her head thrown backwards to the sky, as if imploring (see Picture 43 in Appendix 1). She maintains the position while she travels with quick, tiny *bourrées* for a very short distance. The repressed scream is implied in that movement towards the sky, especially because the music seems to echo it with a muffled piercing note only a few instants afterwards. The Girl then repeats a similar short sequence *en pointe*, although this time she takes her hand to her mouth, as if preventing the scream from issuing from her mouth (see Picture 44 in Appendix 1). The music, with a high-pitched note, coincides this time with her mute yearning. With the third sequence of *bourrées en pointe* she leaves the stage, in shock. When she reappears a bit later, already in the next dance number, she again takes her hand, or rather, her fist, on this occasion, to her mouth, as if restraining

the pain and rage that she is feeling. She repeats the gesture twice while she crosses the stage with wobbling steps. The sequences in both numbers suggest, like the gestures in the film and the novel, the intense set of feelings that the Girl is experiencing as she starts to become aware of the situation<sup>10</sup>.

### ***Critical Acclaim of Seymour's Interpretation***

Seymour's interpretation of the Girl received rave reviews in the press. Two leading critics, Clement Crisp and Clive Barnes, ranked her performance as 'one of the outstanding dance interpretations of the decade' (Crisp, 1961: no page) and 'one among the finest in post-war ballets' (Barnes et al, 1961: 12). Both praised her unique talent in fusing dance and acting and highlighted the expressivity of her whole body, even with minimal motions. Barnes analysed Seymour's contribution to the ballet in more detail:

Seymour belongs to that very rare class [of dancers] that manage to identify themselves so much with the role that they are portraying that the two functions [dancing and acting] are indivisible and undistinguishable . . . [She] does not portray a part, she becomes a person . . . The development of the character from hesitant immaturity to the final blank-faced disillusionment is given with remarkable depth . . . The keynote of her portrayal . . . is its naturalness and simplicity. As soon as she enters in a summer dress . . . she dominates the stage. She can give movements shades of meaning almost as precise as the intonation of speech . . . Her face cannot help mirroring her emotions, to such an extent that . . . at times its very bone-structure seems to change.  
(1961: 13)

The dramatic impact of Seymour's dancing, highlighted by Barnes, comes from her particular emphasis and care in making every part of her body expressive. Paradoxically, she was not very keen on the Stanislavsky method of acting, which was then in fashion and which stresses the complete identification between the performer and the character (Seymour et al., 1984: 163). She cites Ionesco's theatre as a closer source for inspiration. MacMillan had shown her a review of one

of his plays where the critic commented on Ionesco's efforts to 'discover true theatre', pushing his characters to climaxes 'where the sources of the tragic lie' (Seymour et al., 1984: 140). She was fascinated by that idea of finding 'truth' in theatre and sought to convey it through her performances. She did not use her own experiences or personal knowledge about the feelings she portrayed (she was only twenty one when she played the Girl in *The Invitation*) but used her imagination and worked long in the studio to find the right way to 'act out' the emotions of her characters (1984: 140). Dancer Robert Helpmann seems to have provided invaluable advice for that purpose. A choreographer and actor as well as an excellent dramatic dancer, he belonged to the previous generation and enjoyed a well-established reputation for the power of his performances by the time Seymour started her career. They started their friendship during the Royal Ballet's eight-month tour to Australia and New Zealand in 1958. Helpmann was then a principal in the company, frequently partnering Margot Fonteyn, and Seymour had just joined the company from the school (Seymour et al., 1984: 89). Seymour particularly admired his 'vivid sense of theatre' and learnt from him how to explore the psychological and emotional nuances beneath every character, even beneath the stereotypical roles in the nineteenth-century classics (Seymour et al., 1984: 89).

Seymour's eclectic and personal approach to acting benefited the length of the trajectory of the Girl in the story. In her performance of the role, the evolution of the character was progressively disclosed, reaching its peak in No. 10, when the Girl dances with the Husband. Here, for the first time in the ballet, her process of maturation shows signs of full ripening. Seymour's dramatic devices to convey it are subtle: shoulder movements and head tilts that she has used earlier in the

ballet become here slightly sharper, more pronounced and provocative, performed with a flirtatious lingering. Thanks to these small variations, the character's gradual blossoming that timidly, even reluctantly, started in the company of the Boy finally crystalizes in the arms of the Husband.

The Girl in *The Invitation* was the first important created role in Seymour's long career as a dramatic ballerina. Although she had collaborated with MacMillan before (she was the original Girl in *The Burrow* -1958- and the original Bride in *Le baiser de la fée* -1960-), *The Invitation* consolidated the artistic alliance between them. With him, she would create intensely dramatic roles, such as Juliet (1965), Anastasia (in both versions of the ballet, in 1967 and 1971) and Prince Rudolf's mistress in *Mayerling* (1978). Her work with Frederick Ashton gave her the opportunity to show a wider range of dramatic skills. In *Two Pigeons* (1961), created just a few months after *The Invitation* and with Christopher Gable again as her partner, Ashton exploited her talent for comedy, providing her with a role that was exactly the opposite to MacMillan's Girl: a young, innocent adolescent romantically in love with a painter. In *A Month in the Country* (1976), Ashton cast her as Natalia Petrovna, a bored upper-class wife who passionately falls in love with her son's much younger tutor. Seymour's skills as a dramatic ballerina reached a peak of refinement and condensed intensity with this character. She conveyed Natalia's maturity and inner turbulence with the delicate, elegant dancing required by Ashton's choreography.

### ***Other Performers***

Other performers after Lynn Seymour have provided different interpretations of the character of the Girl. A less nuanced but equally intense portrayal is captured



in the 1983 Birmingham Royal Ballet recording. Nicola Katrak, dancing the role, delineates a confident adolescent who is cruelly deceived by an older man. Her Girl is less hesitant and innocent but, by far, more assertive in her relationship with the Boy. The childish side of her character is thinly portrayed, since in the opening numbers her musicality is less precise and the fluency in her arms and body is less liquid than Seymour's. Her infatuation with the Husband is, however, very powerful. Her interaction with him is vigorous and passionate, and, as a result, his brutality emerges as a violence of devastating force. Katrak's Girl has a shorter trajectory in the story because at the beginning she is already an adolescent but she lives her love story with the Husband with such intensity that most of the narrative power of her intervention in the story is concentrated in the moments she interacts with him. As a consequence, although Katrak shortens the length of the character, she explores her feelings in depth, with a special emphasis on her physical and emotional attachment to the Husband.

Leanne Benjamin, in the 1996 revival of the ballet, also locates the character of the Girl directly in the adolescence but hers is an adolescence of a different type. In her hands, the Girl is a teenager who has not yet evolved emotionally and who, in the absence of more mature rules, still exhibits the habits of a spoiled child. In the playful steps with the Boy, there is no childish reminiscence but just familiar grounds where she can easily attract his attention. In her unperceptive puberty, she fails to grasp any spontaneous transformation of their friendship into a romance. In the duets with the Husband, she behaves no differently. Ignorant of how to handle the blossoming change in her adolescent body, she plunges into his arms avidly, just rejoicing in the attention that she receives, especially when the display is in public, during the waltz. In correspondence with her lack of

understanding of the adult world, at the end, she is only aware of the physical damage caused by the Husband. Her gaze expresses utter incredulity about the denouement of her encounter with him. This portrayal of the Girl places the emphasis of the trajectory of the character in the story on her background. The puritanical education provided by her family has failed to prepare her for the changes triggered by adolescence and as a consequence, she lacks the tools that should have alerted her to the dangers involved in unleashing the lust of the wrong man.

In 2016, Francesca Hayward attempted to bring the potential eloquence of the choreography to full dramatic intensity through technical brilliance. Her unaffected dancing along with her musicality and the force and sharpness of her movements allowed for the character's traumatic experience to arise vividly and forcefully in front of the audience. Yasmine Naghdi, in the second cast of this production, stressed the sweetness and freshness of the character. Her facial expressivity as well as her good rapport with David Donnelly, her partner as the Boy, emphasized the Girl's candour and young age.

## **7.4 The Boy**

Although the Girl is the main major character of *The Invitation*, MacMillan created in the Boy a remarkable portrait of an adolescent boy. This tender, sensitive and perceptive young man is arguably the first major role for a male dancer in his repertory. In an interview of the time, he declared 'I suppose when I cast a ballet the girl is the most important thing to me. I'd like it not to be. I'd like the male to be the important one' (in Brinson, 1960a: 9). He would achieve this goal later in his

career, most remarkably in *Mayerling* (1978) and *The Judas Tree* (1992), both with a male character as the main protagonist. The Boy in *The Invitation* is one of the first lengthy antecedents of them. Although not the leading one, he is a character with a distinctive trajectory in the story, parallel to the Girl's until almost the end and with a relevant role as the positive counterpoint of the tragedy in the plot of the ballet.

In the conception of the character, there is a clear imprint of Colette's Phil, with only a few touches from Ana's cousin Julián from Guido's novel. His status as cousin, not as a friend, and his protective attitude towards the Girl are the only features that come from the Argentinian novel. From the tender, sensitive and attentive Phil, he inherits most of his central features. He does not have his impetus or impatience but he is equally reflective about his feelings. The Boy's trajectory during the story is large and deep. He fulfils the expectations of having his first sexual encounter and his experience is conveyed with rich nuances, paying particular attention to the emotional response that it triggers in him.

In comparison with the Girl, his characterization is achieved with more economy of means. He does not have any solo in the ballet but his presence onstage always exposes a trait of his character, especially when he interacts with the Girl and the Wife. His *pas de deux* with them, where most of the time he is providing support, are his most revealing moments. In his two duets with the Girl (in Nos. 2 and 5), he conveys a youthful, playful character, like hers. Even if he is a bit older and more mature, he still retains childhood traits to genuinely enjoy their games together. In their relationship, he shows more initiative, handling his age superiority with care and love. In his duet with the Wife, by contrast, his adolescence is closer to the

maturity of a young man. He accepts her guidance and reciprocates her advances, even if he shows some uncertainty due to his lack of experience. In the dance partnering with her, his support is firm and secure, unlike the one he provided to the Girl, careful and respectful at first, and intimate and warm later.

The absence of solo dances for the Boy in the ballet also correlates with the lack of a distinctive movement vocabulary in his dance sequences. He shares, nevertheless, the qualities of unrestrained use of arms, fluidity of movements and generous floor patterns in the Girl's dance passages, and the expansiveness and freedom in the choreography of the group of Children. Of far greater importance in the definition of his traits is the set of expressive gestures he performs at different moments of the ballet. The 'Head-to-Heart' gesture, which conveys his tenderness and his longing for emotional shelter, is entirely his own. He uses it in his duets with both the Girl and the Wife, showing that, for him, feelings are an important aspect of his relationships with women. His attentive hands and loving embraces, especially to the Girl, also portray this aspect of his personality.

Costumes and music add more information about him. His suit in the first part of the story is simple, in brown colours, in tune with the suits of the rest of the Children. In the evening, during his encounter with the Wife, he no longer wears a jacket, his white shirt with a tie and braces highlighting his virility. In the score, there are no melodies exclusively for him but he shares two important melodies with the Girl and the Wife, the 'Youthful' melody and the 'Romantic' melody. The former stresses his innocence and young age while the latter accentuates his warm nature and sensibility, particularly in his *pas de deux* with the Wife. In his introduction in the story, at the very beginning of the ballet, as soon as the curtain

goes up, a languorous, slightly mysterious tune punctuates his day-dreaming musings. With notes in the harp, it presents his sweet, reflective character as well as his idle, relaxed way of enjoying his vacations.

In the Boy's journey of sexual discovery, there are enough details to map his evolution as a progression with several phases, not as a sudden change. At the beginning, he is more ready and eager than the Girl but later does not rush into the Wife's arms, taking his time to observe the development of the story and to make his decision. Despite the explicitness of the sexual act and the emphasis that it places on the physicality of the experience, his emotional state is carefully delineated. His first interactions with the Wife are discreet, through cautious glances, and, during the number of the seduction, he expresses his doubts on several occasions, most notably in the foetal position in the floor (again a gesture rather than a dance step) that most overtly exposes his adolescent insecurity. He is not an adolescent who happily rushes into the first carnal option that is handed to him. He takes his time to analyse his feelings. And at the end, after the encounter, he is not euphoric or enraptured but rather confused, trying to make sense of his experience. He pauses and vacillates before he, finally, passionately kisses the Wife goodbye. This anti-romantic vision of the Boy's first sexual experience, which directly draws from Colette's portrayal of adolescence as a difficult, bitter-sweet passage into adulthood, adds a sense of reality to his trajectory in the story. Though tender and happy, it produces changes that need time to be absorbed.

### ***Christopher Gable***

The first portrayal of the virile yet lyrical vulnerability of the Boy was constructed by Christopher Gable, the dancer who created the role. Although he was not

MacMillan's first choice for the role (Pirmin Trecu injured his knee before rehearsals started), his acting skills and musicality convinced the choreographer that he was a good match for Seymour, with whom Gable had a close friendship since their days together at the Royal Ballet School (Parry, 2009: 226). The Boy/Girl couple in *The Invitation* was the first outcome of a fruitful partnership between the two dancers that would end with *Romeo and Juliet* (1965), since Gable left dance to pursue career in acting the following season (Parry, 2009: 314). At the time of creating his role in *The Invitation*, Gable was interested in the Method school of acting and was avidly reading books of Stanislavsky (Seymour, 1984: 136). This care for the actorly aspects of his dancing allowed him to produce a robust, serene and believable interpretation of the role of the Boy. He had a strong stage presence that could become discreet in the crowd scenes where his participation was only secondary. Yet, he would firmly maintain the character during those moments, transmitting narrative information with his eyes, gestures and stillness, as in the glances he exchanges with the Wife during the dance lesson (Barnes et al., 1961: 11) or in the gaze of astonishment and embarrassment he adopts as the Girl dances for the Husband (Money, 1976: 201). When dancing with his partners, his eyes could also transmit a wide variety of meanings, such as a visual caress, a confident reassurance or a yearning for certainty.

In his dancing, Gable's musicality was particularly important in the opening numbers, where the child still in the Boy is portrayed through the games he shares with the Girl. The choreography there includes steps that seem senseless, as if coming from the coherence of a child. They match the playfulness in the music by interacting with it as if dance and music were also childhood friends. Gable (with Seymour) conveyed this interplay with natural simplicity. He hid the musical

precision with an impression of effortless spontaneity. Later, in the *pas de deux* with his two partners, he would maintain a similar unaffected yet fully expressive surface. His support was precise and serenely dramatic, with the supporting arms and hands transmitting the nuances of meaning of the different (and evolving) rapport of the Boy with the two women.

### ***Other Performers***

In 1983, Michael O'Hare, dancing the role of the Boy in the Birmingham Royal Ballet's production of the ballet, portrayed an adolescent who was callower than Gable's. O'Hare had a smaller, less athletic constitution and this physique helped him to stress the inexperienced nature of the Boy. In the duets with Nicola Katrak's assertive Girl, O'Hare's Boy was the most childish adolescent in the couple, eager to follow her daring initiatives. In the *pas de deux* with June Highwood's avid Wife, he was a sensitive novice, hardly old enough to have such a transformative sexual experience. O'Hare provided a tentative, eager support to his two female partners, as if he was uncertain about how to proceed with them but was ready to try his best. Happy under the direction of his partners, he accommodated his steps to the pace and tone of theirs. This type of attentive, malleable dancing helped O'Hare to shape the immaturity at the verge of ripening that was the key feature of his interpretation of the Boy. He used the set of expressive gestures depicting the Boy's confusion about the events of the day for the same purpose. He performed them with quiet intensity, making the Boy's bewilderment touchingly naïve and poignant.

Stuart Cassidy, in the 1996 revival, offered a very different portrayal. His physique, hefty and much taller than Leanne Benjamin's Girl, was exploited to give the role a

warm maturity. In the duets with the Girl, Cassidy's Boy is the sensible partner. He follows her audacities just to please her and to ensure that she does not go too far. Cassidy emphasizes the protective side of the character, especially in the supported passages, where his arms surrounding her body express a patient firmness. With the Wife, he reveals the reflective aspect of his incipient adulthood. His size and poise stress his awareness of the critical experience he is going through, for in the dubitative pauses, he seems responsibly indecisive. If he becomes responsive to the Wife's advances and attentive to her demands, it is because he has judiciously meditated the transcendence of her actions. Cassidy's gestures and movements in this duet possess a nuanced equilibrium between sensible perception and sensitive reaction.

In 2016, Vadim Muntagirov opted too for a quiet, pensive version of the role. His poised Boy was a loving, quiet companion to the Girl and, later, a bewildered adolescent in the arms of the Wife. His support to both partners, remarkably secure, had a noble trait that matched the unpretentiousness of his interpretative skills. David Donnelly, in the second cast that year, proposed a frisky and lively rendering of the role. In his interpretation, the Boy 'brings spontaneity and vitality to the two relationships in which the Boy is involved. He is joyful and playful in the duets with the Girl, and is tenderly impulsive in his scenes with the Wife' (de Lucas, 2016). His enthusiastic involvement in the events of the day intensifies the relevance of the character in the plot of the ballet.



## 7.5 The Wife

Less central than the Girl, the Wife is the second female character with a crucial presence in the story. Although her relevance seems discreet until she seduces the Boy, her presence adds important contrasts to the quartet of major characters and their intersected storylines. She is the counterpoint of the Girl in gaining the Boy's affection, bringing the experience, maturity and guidance that the young girl lacks. And she is the foil to her Husband in her affair with an adolescent, for she channels her encounter through the tenderness and care that is at the other end of the spectrum of his violent behaviour with the Girl. The significance of her intervention for the plot is mirrored by the depth with which her emotions are explored. Despite her secondary position in relation to the Girl, several dramatic elements are devoted to delineating her personality, especially the aspects related to her relationship with her Husband. The traits revealed in the story do not cover many dimensions of her character but the strong emphasis on her emotional life helps to make the characterization rich in depth.

### *Angst*

The presentation of the Wife in the story announces two important traits in her character, the sadness in her soul and the angst caused by her Husband's behaviour. As soon as she enters the stage, her sorrow is imprinted in the lament expressed by the oboe that escorts her movements. The poignancy suggested by the tune together with the delicate woodwind sonority of the instrument, which in the score contrasts with the sweetness of the flute in the melody for the Girl and with the severity of the horns in the melody for the Husband, brings out her innermost feeling (see Musical Example 2 in Appendix 2). A hint of the cause

responsible for the unhappiness exposed by the music is implicit in her behaviour during her first moments onstage. She arrives a bit earlier than her Husband and expresses concern over his aloofness, which she tries to soften in the eyes of the rest of the characters with her polite and kind exchange of greetings with the hostess. Her immediate reaction as soon as she notices that her Husband has approached the Girl is even more revealing. She interrupts the introduction with determination, implying that she knows the outcome of the Husband's interest in a young girl. She has witnessed it before.

The Wife's grief, expressed through the musical and kinetic cues in her presentation within the story, is also subtly suggested by the slight asymmetry to the neckline of the dress that she wears in the evening events. The asymmetric design is somewhat unsettling and provides a subtle comment on the character (Woodcock, 2002a: 107). More overtly, a denotative connotation of sorrow is the dominant feature in the movements and gestures in the set of choreographic elements that are distinctive of the character. The 'head-to- heart' gesture that opens the Wife/Husband *pas de deux* is the first direct kinetic indicative of her suffering. As she and her Husband walk to the front of the stage at the beginning of their duet, she leans her head towards him, as if longing to rest it on his shoulders. His reaction of annoyance does not seem to surprise her since her cautious gesture is performed without any conviction, but it seems to hurt her, for she expresses her grief by transforming her head movement into a circle denoting despair. This first motion in the *pas de deux*, exploiting the expressivity of the head, introduces a yearning that the Wife's head also evokes through backwards bends in different moments of the ballet, especially during her solo in No. 13. In addition to her head, the Wife's arms are particularly significant in conveying angst. In stark contrast

with the Girl's fluid and graceful arms, the Wife's are always severe and desperate, both in the imploring gestures that, in a wide range of shapes, she frequently performs and in the sorrowful projections that stylized (not gestural) movements like *arabesques* cast in the space surrounding her body.

Her state of agitation increases as the story progresses. Her solo at the beginning of No. 13, when the irrevocability of the Husband's success with the Girl is already patent, is exclusively devoted to portray it. Here the Wife's floor patterns are ceaseless and large, yet give the impression of confinement, as if she is trying to find an exit to escape from her feelings but failing to do so despite her efforts in every direction. The use of arms reinforces this impression, since they dominate the choreography with their imploring gestures and movements, vividly visualizing the Wife's inner anxiety. Even legs and footwork, with a secondary relevance in the solo, express her agitation through their ceaseless pace and outwards projections (see Picture 46 in Appendix 1).

### ***Sex and Feelings - Relationships with Husband and Boy***

Earlier in the ballet, the Husband/Wife duet in No. 6 contains the details that complete the characterization of the Wife's inner unhappiness. As discussed in chapter six, the unsatisfactory relationship that she has with her Husband, both in sexual and emotional terms, is depicted through a variety of choreographic means, such as lack of flow in the phrases, ugly body shapes, restrained floor patterns, abrupt supports and heavy music. The turbulence in the rapport with him and her subjugation to his command are portrayed in depth and with insistence, since several bursts of anger and gestures of contempt of the Husband are intermittently inserted across the ballet (see Picture 47 in Appendix 1). The impact of this

miserable bond in the Wife's disposition is so important that the rest of the aspects of the Wife's character derive from it. She might seem unsympathetic with the Girl for not preventing her rape despite knowing it will happen, but the intensity of her angst and her powerless position in front of her Husband block any thought of action. She is absorbed in her own tragedy and is only capable of perceiving the effects that her Husband's behaviour produces in her state of mind. His sexual interest in the Girl only adds another affront to her grief.

Her brief affair with the Boy also connects with this facet of her personality. In direct relation to the sexual and emotional relationship with her Husband, the encounter with the Boy exposes the features buried by her unhappy marriage. With the Boy, the Wife is able to express tenderness, to receive affection and to achieve sexual satisfaction. The kinetic, gestural and musical cues in their duet, such as the intimate support, the affectionate caresses and the melodic music, complete the portrayal of the Wife with the exposure of the needs unfulfilled by her husband. Previously stressed as absent in the duet with him, they are now made visible with the Boy, reinforcing, by contrast, the depiction of the permanent lack habitually endured by the Wife. The sense of a persisting deprivation in her emotional and sexual life is also emphasized by the brevity of her affair with the Boy. It starts in her highest moment of desperation, after her brief agitated solo at the beginning of No. 13. Although she has earlier showed some signs of attraction for him, their affair seems to arrive in a moment of weakness, since from the moment the sexual act is consummated, she quickly returns to her duties as a guest in the party and as a wife for her husband. The Boy's passionate farewell kiss comes as a surprise to her, as if once the affair is over and she has come back to normal life, there is no space for such a tender gesture anymore. Her reaction is

redolent of low self-esteem. And as soon as she sees her Husband, she immediately aligns with him, forgetting the presence of the rest of the characters. Her trajectory in the story seems thus circular. It appears that she finishes in the same place where she started but, in fact, she has gone through an intense inner journey. Her Husband's flirtation with the Girl has made her sorrow bigger; her affair with the Boy has made her life fleetingly fuller. Her story is, like the Girl's, also a tragedy with long-lasting effects.

### ***Anne Heaton***

Despite the rich delineation of these aspects of the character, many other details in the Wife (such as the exact nature of her marriage or the real impulse that takes her to the Boy) remain mysterious. This ambiguity has allowed a wide variety of interpretations among the successive dancers of the role. Anne Heaton, the first Wife, stressed the strength of the marital bond. Despite the Husband's difficult character and continuous affairs, her Wife considers that her duty is to stay by his side and collaborate with him in order to maintain the external façade of perfection that in fact hides a disastrous intimacy. In Heaton's interpretation, the Wife firmly believes that marriages are a life-time bond and the spouses should respect it, even at a high personal cost. Heaton's understanding of this duality, characteristic of many upper-class Edwardian marriages, also allowed her Wife to plunge in her affair with the Boy with full intensity. She did not egotistically seek the satisfaction of her senses but was deliberately gentle and loving with the Boy. She went through the experience enjoying both the sexual and emotional implications, although she was aware of the one-night stand nature of the encounter.

Anne Heaton's maturity and her long experience as a celebrated dramatic dancer helped her to build the character of the Wife with subtle intensity. She had recently retired from dancing but returned, at MacMillan's insistence, to perform the role (Parry, 2009: 226). Her dramatic skills had a paramount importance in her way of interpreting a part. For her, like for MacMillan, dance was also drama and acting was as important as dancing technique (Heaton, 2002). Her aim onstage was to portray a real character and for that purpose she would exploit the expressivity of both gestures and dance steps (2002). She would invest the same care in making a lift ultra-dramatic as in making small gestures, such as a smile or a light in her eye, powerfully expressive (2002). This approach to dance is evident in *The Invitation*. The *pas de deux* with her Husband is full of moments where Heaton's dramatic skills imprint dance steps with full expressivity. The Goya-inspired pose, the waist level lifts and the *arabesques*, for instance, are not mere elements of the choreography but moments of dramatic intensity that bring out some of the features in the stormy relationship between the characters. Similarly, Heaton imbues the gestures that are an essential part of the choreography in the *pas de deux* with the Boy (such as the caresses and embraces) with a tenderness that exemplifies her ability to convey nuances of meaning through minute movements. Much of her portrayal of the Wife's relationship with the Boy as a brief affair mutually beneficial in both sexual and affective terms comes from the expressivity that she adds to these gestures.

### ***Other Performers***

Anya Linden danced the role of the Wife in the 1962-63 season of the Royal Ballet and in the 1965 season of the Touring Company (Bland, 1981: 279 and 300).

Linden's elegant dancing qualities helped stress the dignity of the marital union and soften the Wife's brittleness (Seymour, 1984: 154). Her Wife was a woman in love with her Husband and therefore indulgent of his behaviour and committed to their marriage. Her love for him explains why she decides to support him at the end of the ballet, picking up the pieces of their marriage as she leaves the stage by his side (in Wake, 2003). Olivia Cowley, in 2016, followed this line of approaching the role. Although her Wife is 'a suffering woman who is constantly fighting for keeping the turmoil in her soul private', she still repeatedly attempts to gain her husband's affection (de Lucas, 2016). Because of that trait in her nature, she is deeply hurt by his lack of love and respect. Because she loves him, she allows herself to have the affair with the Boy almost against her will (de Lucas, 2016). Cowley's acting is sober, and she makes the most of the solos, where the restlessness of the character is made visible through a resolute attack in the movements.

In 1983, June Highwood, dancing the Wife in the Birmingham Royal Ballet's production, had a different understanding of the Husband/Wife relationship. Her Wife is bitterly entrapped in her marriage. She is certainly not in love with her Husband, to whom she, desperately, assertively yet powerlessly, always stands up. She finds the indissolubility of the union hard to accept and, for that reason, instead of the serene acceptance portrayed by Heaton or the loving tolerance delineated by Linden, she reluctantly stays with her Husband at the end of the story. The costumes that the Wife wears across the ballet, all high-necked according to Edwardian fashion, become, in Highwood's interpretation, a sort of straightjacket for the character. The connotations of class and elegance that they

possessed in earlier versions of the role are turned here into allusions to the Wife's feelings of unwilling confinement in her marriage.

Highwood's dancing and acting qualities also provide the Wife's emotional state with new nuances of meaning. Rather than an inner turmoil of angst for her Husband's behaviour, her dominant mood is a permanent resentment for her powerless situation with him. This different insight into the role, which clearly arises from the assertiveness with which she performs the duets with him, is also briefly reflected in the Wife's solo. The pace of the music is slower than in earlier versions and Highwood's performance stresses the shape of the movements rather than their dynamic qualities. As a result, the agitation of the Wife does not seem deeply rooted or especially intense at this moment of the story but, rather, simply persistent and wearying. This condition of tired acrimony also determines the tone of her relationship with the Boy. In Highwood's interpretation, the Wife seduces him with the sole intention of seeking a temporal relief from her bitter situation. Although she guides him with patience, her gestures are firm and direct, as if her longing for his body is the only driving force of her actions, once she has allowed herself to have the affair. When the couple bids farewell, she resents losing the glimpse of freedom that he represents for her. She does not seem to feel any concern for the Boy's mixed emotions.

In 1996, Genesia Rosato endowed the Wife with a substratum of goodness that guides all her actions in the story. If she is able to bear the mistreatment by her Husband and even to inhibit a full understanding of his evilness, it is thanks to that deep inner kindness. When she goes to his aid at the end of the story, it is because she notices his distress and wants to ease it. Her affair with the Boy seems to



spring from the same kind-hearted trait. The seduction progresses at an unhurried, unpremeditated pace, as if the purpose of every intimate contact is just to show the Boy that he needs not to be afraid of getting closer to a woman. Rosato cloaks the gestures in this duet with a tenderness and loving care close to maternal affection. Earlier, in the presentation of the character, her discreet gait suggests a melancholic, quiet personality. In the brief solos, Rosato maintains a similar dignity, as if the Wife's suffering is only the powerlessness of her goodness to reach any further.

In 1998, in a television programme which only features the Wife/Boy *pas de deux*, Deborah Bull proposes a very different understanding of the role of the Wife. In her partial interpretation of the character, she significantly reduces the emotional implications of her affair with the Boy. Her Wife is a female version of a womaniser who seduces him with complete disregard for his feelings and in revenge for her Husband's infidelities (in Marshall, 1998). Interested only in equalling her Husband with a sexual conquest of her own, she simplifies the nuances of her relationship with the Boy and their affair therefore remains on the surface of the flesh. This interpretation of the Boy/Wife relationship locates the story in parameters that differ from the literary source of the ballet (Colette); from the portrayal offered by the first cast in 1960 (Anne Heaton and Christopher Gable); and even from the film version of the story, in which Edwige Feuillère's vivid incarnation of Mme. Dalleray manages to keep the subtleties of Colette's text despite the fact that Claude Autant-Lara's prosaic style removes from the screen most of the sensuality in Colette's pages. Bull's understanding of the Wife does not keep the two sides (emotional and sexual) that the affair possesses in these

antecedents, thereby considerably reducing the rich complexity of the encounter and the depth of the character of the Wife.

## **7.6 The Husband**

Among the four central characters of *The Invitation*, the Husband is the less rounded part yet his presence is essential in the plot, as the catalyst for events. From the moment he enters the story, the focus shifts away from the Girl/Boy incipient romance and turns to the crossed, intergenerational affairs that transform the story initially presented into the chronicle of an ill-fated attraction. He is a distressing presence in the house party, even if, at first, he spurs the sensuality in the Girl, making it blossom. Much of the dramatic tension in the ballet comes from his intervention in a scene, since his actions are frequently underlined by assonant, disturbing music that points to his relevance in the development of the story. And in addition to his leading role in the progression and denouement of the main narrative thread, he also has a key narrative weight in the secondary storyline, for he is behind the deeply rooted suffering of his wife.

### ***Flat***

Despite his relevance in the plot, many traits of the Husband's background and personality are not clearly defined in the story. There is a strong stress on the negative aspects of his personality. His rude manners with his Wife are portrayed in detail and in length in the *pas de deux* of the couple and in the numerous brief quarrels they have when they are alone. In addition, the melody attached to his participation in a scene, the 'sinister' melody, is authoritative, menacing, and even predatory due to the associations of the leading instruments, the horns, with

scenes of hunt in nineteenth century ballets, as commented earlier (see Musical Example 3 in Appendix 2). The only positive features in his portrayal come from his good-looking appearance and his charming courting of the Girl but, still, these two characteristics are not unequivocally presented, for the music insistently sends warnings against the physical actions with dissonant, heavy tunes. For instance, the foregoing 'sinister' melody sounds in the music as soon as the Husband enters onstage for the first time, alerting the audience that his attractive aspect and good manners hide a darker side. Similarly, the strongly unsettling tune that underlines the lifts at the end of the Husband/Girl duet in No. 10 foreshadows the terrible denouement of the seduction. In these two instances, the non-diegetic music exposes the Husband's nefarious nature and devious intentions, complementing with essential information the positive characterization that arises from the action onstage.

The absence of unambiguously positive features in his personality makes the character of the Husband a rather flat, mono-dimensional figure, especially in comparison to the other three major characters of the ballet, which are richly delineated, and in comparison with the source for its conception, Pablo Aguirre, from Beatriz Guido's novel and Torre Nilsson's film. From Aguirre in the film, the Husband takes some external features (such as the moustache or the elegant yet informal costume for the scene of the rape, a white shirt and black trousers) but he does not inherit the attractive image that he decidedly projects when he is with women or when he is doing his job as a member of the Parliament. Since in the ballet the Husband is rarely presented in a similar overtly alluring way, he hardly attracts any sympathy from the audience. He remains almost a stereotype, a character whose actions are predictable, always going in the same direction. While

this one-dimensional conception of the character works well at the plot level (he is the evil character responsible for the tragedy in the climax of the story), it prevents the part from having a deeper, more rounded configuration.

### ***Static***

The rather flat conception of the character of the Husband also explains why the late appearance of guilt in his mind does not look entirely believable. The gesture of contrition that he performs after the rape is the only glimpse in his mind in the ballet (this far his characterization has focused on his external appearance and actions) and clashes with the portrayal offered across the story, consistently wicked. It is, furthermore, incongruous with the philandering temperament presented through the responses of his Wife to his interest in the Girl. The remorseful feelings, even if sincere, are not likely to last long, for he has seduced (and maybe raped) young girls before, with no consequences. The end of the Husband's trajectory in the story with this late and not very convincing sketch of a psychological change do not add a strong, credible emotional dimension to his set of features and, in addition, hardly provide the character with a dynamic evolution during the storyworld time. Like his Wife, he ends the story at the same point as he started but, unlike her, he leaves the story without the experience of a long inner journey. He remains a mainly static figure, certainly the most static among the four major roles in the ballet.

### ***Desmond Doyle***

The unidimensional and static delineation of the role of the Husband has allowed little space for interpretation to the different performers of the role. Most of the dancers explore the feature of evilness in more or less depth, offering portrayals

that range from an overtly forceful character to a more subtly mischievous role. The first interpreter of the part, Desmond Doyle, had a potent presence on stage. His robust, tall physical complexion suited both the physical attraction the Husband elicits from the Girl and the violence that he needs to exert to gain her virginity. Doyle's broad shoulders projected an impressive image in the Husband's duets with the Girl, where they helped to highlight their different age and experience. They also looked imposing and forceful in the violent scenes with her. His partnering was commanding with his two partners. With his Wife, his supporting arms conveyed brusque and harsh nuances. With the Girl, it possessed connotations of authority and confidence. A 'master of understatement' (Clarke, 1991: n. p.), Doyle's acting skills added an effectively simple expressivity to his dancing and gestures. His cold glances to his Wife were full of disdain. His poised manners with the other guests transmitted a restrained aloofness. His intense gazes and gallant gestures with the Girl never looked coarse or sentimental but calm and calculated. He projected certain charm with his manners, thus helping the audience to understand why the Girl was so infatuated with the Husband.

### ***Other Performers***

In 1996, Irek Mukhamedov retained many aspects of Doyle's portrayal. He had a similarly robust physique and potent presence on stage so that the imposing authority of his Husband was forceful too. His partnering to both his partners was confident and strong, giving an impression of effortlessness that unfolded the corporal power of the character and anticipated the brutality of his fatal crime. It was in the delineation of the personality of the character where Mukhamedov added new nuances to the role. In his portrayal, the Husband was far more

introspective and graver than Doyle's attractive man and, as a result, the philandering aspect of his nature was less evident. With no overt flirtatious urge, he acted more passively in his relationship with the Girl. Rather than instigate her actions, he seemed to just take advantage of her inappropriate behaviour. When the rape takes place, the brooding countenance kept until then reveals its true nature. Not only was it the sign of a pensive character but also the trace of a real, evil threat.

The two dancers alternating the role in the 2016 revival, Gary Avis and Thomas Whitehead, followed Mukhamedov's understanding of the role. They both stressed the evil nature of the character and presented the Husband as an essentially wicked man from the onset of the story. With no other facet in his personality exposed, the character portrayed by both performers poisons the atmosphere of every scene in which he participates. Their Husband is a bitter man that cannot control his lust for the Girl. Avis' rendition benefited from the technical command with which he executed the duet of the rape. His support in this scene is so imposing that the physical power of the Husband seems to fall upon the defenceless Girl with an enormous force. Whitehead disclosed the Husband's impetus more discreetly but permeated his violent actions with a distressing impulse to harm that intensified the evilness of the crime (de Lucas, 2016).

Alain Dubreuil, playing the role in 1983 for Birmingham Royal Ballet, had a less potent physique than most of his predecessors and that aspect added important nuances to his portrayal. Visually, the physical contrast with the Girl and the Wife was not overwhelming and, in addition, his support during the duets lacked a strong physical command. His efforts to handle the female bodies were visible and

for that reason, his Husband arose as a tawdry figure. He was clumsy in executing the violent acts, especially the waist lifts in the duet with his Wife and the lifts and supports of the Girl during the rape, and this ungracefulness helped to stress the sordid aspects of his actions. Not forcefully brutal but pathetically vicious, Dubreuil's characterization of the Husband made him an ordinary man driven by his lust. His vulgar manners added a significant factor to the set of negative features in the conception of the character, reinforcing the unsympathetic aspects of his personality. As responsible for the tragic events in the story, Dubreuil's prosaic Husband is a villain with no allure.

## CHAPTER 8: IN CONTEXT: MAIN NARRATIVE CHOICES IN PERSPECTIVE

### 8.1 Introduction

The first of the four defining principles of David Herman's notion of narrative, introduced in chapter two as a framing concept of this thesis, refers to the pragmatic context in which the narrative unfolds. According to Herman, a narrative is 'a representation that is situated in –must be interpreted in light of- a specific discourse context or occasion of telling' (2009: 14). In my argumentation this far, references to the dance tradition to which *The Invitation*, as a narrative ballet, belongs have been continuous, not only because the methodological approach includes dance theory and analysis as much as narratology but also because I have frequently suggested links between MacMillan's choices in this ballet and other works in his repertory, other ballets by other choreographers which might have directly inspired his choreography, and the ballet conventions which he benefits from and which he plays with in order to shape the story of the ballet. In this chapter, I take this line of enquiry further by examining the most immediate artistic context of the ballet, including both dance and drama. As a ballet created in London in 1960 for the Royal Ballet, *The Invitation* is the product of a particular artistic environment and several features of the ballet are fruits of that influence. I will concentrate here on the two aspects that probably reflect best the imprint of the artistic circumstances surrounding MacMillan at the time of the creation of the ballet. Firstly, I will focus on the theme of sex that so prominently features in the ballet, articulating the plot of the narrative and dominating the conception of the characters. The exploration on the topic proposed by MacMillan



is extensive and multifaceted, for it includes not one but four different relationships and comprises a wide variety of forms, from a young innocent love, to a bitter unfulfilling marital relation, a brief, intensely erotic intergenerational and adulterous affair and a terrible rape. The reasons and antecedents behind that insistent diversity will be explored here, through the lens of the Royal Ballet tradition, the dance repertory to which MacMillan was most exposed in the decade preceding *The Invitation*, and the post war British drama, which he frequently cited as one of his most decisive influences.

Secondly, I will concentrate on the two main ways in which MacMillan made the story from two literary sources his own. The setting of the ballet in an upper-class family in the British Edwardian era, instead of Colette's coastal France and Beatriz Guido's urban Argentine, and the unhappy marriage that bonds together the two adult protagonists of the story (a marriage that did not feature in any of the source novels) allow for the ballet to present a rich web of direct and indirect ballet allusions. Some previous ballets with an Edwardian setting and/or with a reference to a marriage of convenience resonate in *The Invitation*. The exploration of the similarities, nuances and differences between those antecedents and MacMillan's ballet can help to expose the place in ballet history claimed by the choreographer through the choices he made in *The Invitation*.

## **8.2 Political, Cultural & Sociological Context: Britain in the 1950s**

The 1950s were paradoxical years in British history. A period of full employment, economic prosperity and social stability, it was also a time when many post-war certainties were challenged and redefined (Lacey, 1995: 1-4). In the political arena,

three successive conservative administrations achieved political consensus on economic and foreign policy, and the role of the Welfare State (Lacey, 1995: 4). The dominating views on society were also conservative: the family was considered a central unit, with traditional gender roles for men and women, and established institutions (the monarchy and the Church of England) were widely supported (Lacey, 1995: 14). The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 exemplified the conservatism and optimism of the time. The nation was viewed as a family and the royal family as its symbolic centre. The figure of the Queen embodied the concept of Britain as head of the Commonwealth and the diplomatic centre of the Western Alliance (Lacey, 1995: 15).

A break in this tendency occurred in 1956. Several cultural and political events determined the emergence of dissenting attitudes, questioning prevailing views and values. The Soviet invasion of Hungary and, particularly, the Anglo-French invasion of the Suez Canal divided opinion in UK, with part of the nation in favour of the use of force and part of it against it. In London, a huge public meeting in Trafalgar Square made visible the dissent against the government action in Egypt (Lacey, 1995: 15). In tune with these political episodes, images and attitudes of rebellion (James Dean, Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll) became cultural icons for post-war youth (Lacey, 1995: 15). And theatre, too, produced its own anti-establishment representations. In 1956, the drama stage became one of the main forums in which dominant values could be debated and contested (Lacey, 1995: 4). The premiere of John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court Theatre (and its later screening by the BBC and ITV, with estimated audiences of 5 million) was a cultural phenomenon that converted the play into the principal

reference for the artistic and intellectual break that took place during the second part of the decade (Lacey, 1995: 17).

On gender issues, the 1950s were also ambivalent. Women were mainly confined to the domestic sphere, for after the war they had left their jobs in the factories to resume their traditional roles as wives and mothers (Lacey, 1995: 90). Their position and experience at home and within the family, however, attracted sociological interest. John Bowlby's *Child Care and the Growth of Love* (1953) presented research on the long term effects of maternal deprivation and its arguments were used against working mothers and their absence from home during their workday (Lacey, 1995: 91). The second Kinsey Report, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (1953), brought attention to the need for pleasurable and guilt-free sex for women, although the debate took for granted that sex was only permissible within the bounds of marriage (Lacey, 1995: 91). The Report of the Wolfenden Committee into homosexuality and prostitution in 1957 was also discussed in terms of gender issues. Its advocacy for the decriminalization of homosexuality and systems of 'moral welfare' for prostitutes was argued in a context of increased moral censure and a concern for the effects of extra-marital and homosexual sex on the family unit (Lacey, 1995: 92). In the subversive climate of 1956, these dominant assumptions on women started to be actively explored and exposed. Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey* (1959) is considered one of the first plays to break sexual (and racial) taboos (Lacey, 1995: 93). Its young protagonist defies conventions when at the end of the play she decides to become a single mother and raise her still unborn baby on her own.

Amid this panorama, Kenneth MacMillan created *The Invitation*, which directly tackles issues of female sexuality, marital confinement and sexual abuse. His piece thus invites a reflection on topics with a perceptible resonance for the society of the 1950s. Even the rape that exposes violence against women in the ballet matches the frequent focus of attention that similar events received in the press of the period (Barnes et al, 1961: 34). Along with this thematic connection to some of the sociological concerns of the fifties, MacMillan's dramatic treatment of the subject matter also had important links with the artistic trends of the era. For the configuration of the ballet, he generously drew from the dance and drama traditions of his time, as discussed in length in the following sections.

### **8.3 Dance Context: Sex on the Ballet Stage**

The theme of sex was not new to the British ballet stage by the time MacMillan choreographed *The Invitation* in 1960. Frederick Ashton, the chief choreographer of the Royal Ballet since 1935 (Kavanagh, 1996: 181), had presented sex onstage in several ballets and foreign companies visiting London after the war had also brought ballets with some sexual content to British soil. The presence and treatment of sex in that repertory varies in terms of plot relevance and choreographic presentation and MacMillan seems to have absorbed and incorporated those antecedents in different ways. In some cases, he merely borrowed some choreographic movements and plot strategies but in others, he used those models either as a point of reference to spur his imagination or as a point of departure to establish his own personal and distinctive choreographic response to the theme.

From the choreographers in foreign companies, George Balanchine represents a minor but choreographically relevant influence on MacMillan. He borrowed from him the anecdotal, explicit reference to orgasm from *The Prodigal Son* (1929). He reworked it in the diverse ways that I highlighted earlier in chapter four and, retouched, he made it the most impacting narrative moment of *The Invitation*, vividly depicting the consummation of the rape<sup>1</sup>. From Jerome Robbins and Roland Petit, MacMillan probably took the inspiration for the explicit description of the intercourse onstage. Robbins' *The Cage* (1951), which was scheduled in the 1952 New York City Ballet's visit to London, has scenes where female dancers imitating predatory insects kill their mates after sex (Nicholas, 2013: 64). With a thin narrative about a Novice performing a ritual sexual sacrifice in order to be accepted as a member of the all-female group, one of the climaxes of the story is the intercourse preceding the killing of her second victim. The depiction is unambiguous, with their bodies curving deeply towards each other and their pelvises moving forwards in sexual excitement (Nicholas, 2013: 64). The male body is especially exposed, with only 'half a loin cloth, bare legged, shoeless and apparently with one bare hip' (Nicholas, 2013: 64). The clear allusion to sexual activity generated some controversy in London, where the press discussed its appropriateness for the ballet stage<sup>2</sup> (Nicholas, 2013: 64). As a plausible influence on MacMillan, it represents an antecedent emulated in the Wife/Boy encounter and reversed, also graphically, in the Husband/Girl violent rape<sup>3</sup>.

Petit's sensual and ardent choreography for the duets of his couples, especially those in his ballet *Carmen* (1949), where the bodies of the two main characters are in close, intimate contact during their passionate meetings, might have also spurred MacMillan to explore similar situations through his own personal lens and

vocabulary. He certainly knew the work of the French choreographer, for he had danced in the ballet *Ballabile*, which Petit created in 1950 for the Royal Ballet (Parry, 2009: 92), and had had several opportunities to watch his ballets in the 1940s. In 1946, Les Ballets des Champs Elysées, with Petit's works and dancers Renée Jeanmaire and Jean Babilée, had a summer season at Covent Garden (Bland, 1981: 88) which MacMillan did not miss (Parry, 2009: 70). Three years later, in the autumn of 1949, while the Sadler's Wells company was at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, Petit's Ballets des Champs-Elysées was performing at the neighbouring theatre (Bland, 1981: 99), where they premiered *Carmen* (1949) (Lidova, 2005). Although MacMillan would later be disappointed over his experience of working with Petit in *Ballabile* (Parry, 2009: 93), he was initially fascinated by his chic style (Parry, 2009: 69). His treatment of sexual intimacy might have stimulated MacMillan's imagination, especially in the direction of including explicit portrayals of sexual encounters onstage.

In terms of plot conception, Antony Tudor's *Pillar of Fire* (1942) is possibly the most direct forerunner of *The Invitation*<sup>4</sup>. It is loosely based on the biblical story of Hagar, a handmaiden to Abraham's wife Sarah who has a son with him and is outcast into the wilderness after Sarah and Abraham have a son of their own (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 114). *Pillar* tells the story of the internal struggle of Hagar, a character from a bourgeois family in this ballet. She experiences sexual repression and sexual awakening across the events in the plot (Jones, 2013: 259). At the beginning of the ballet, she considers that her sexuality is repressed, for she feels a powerful attraction to an appropriate partner, the Friend, interested in her youngest sister (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 116). To satisfy her suppressed desires, she gives herself to the Man Opposite and spends the rest of the ballet feeling

guilty about her need for this man (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 117). Because of her encounter with him, she becomes a fallen woman not only to her own troubled mind but also to her family and friends, for whom she becomes an outcast. She is rescued from her inner turmoil and social rejection by the Friend, who finally recognizes his love for her (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 118). The plot that organizes this story places sexuality at the heart of the ballet. The initial state of the protagonist is deeply affected by her repressed sexuality and her intercourse with the Man Opposite represents a turning point in the story. The denouement has a direct relation to it, for it finally resolves Hagar's conflicts in search of her sexuality with an action from the Friend. Succinctly, Tudor summarized his plot as the story of a woman who 'thought she had lost a life of sexuality' and then 'sexuality helps [her] out of [her] problems' (quoted in Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 115). The social background plays an important role in her journey of discovery. Although the specific setting of the story is not provided, the set and costume designs recall a town in New England at the turn of the century (Jones, 2013: 259). The bourgeois class to whom Hagar belongs has morally upright values regarding sex, a trait that Tudor imported from the English bourgeoisie (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994: 119). Her initial state of anguish and her subsequent guilt and social dismissal are deeply rooted in those sexual values dominant in her social class.

The story and plot of *The Invitation* possess a similar underlying structure. Also set in the context of an upper-class milieu, the prevailing sexual values have a direct impact on the characters' actions. More importantly, the journey of sexual discovery also sustains the main narrative line of the ballet. However, in MacMillan's story, sex has a different effect. Rather than being a source that solves the heroine's problems, sex is, in *The Invitation*, the cause of permanent damages.

The violent denouement of the Girl's story places MacMillan's ballet at the opposite end of Tudor's ballet. Their contrasting endings set them apart after sharing many points of contact at the level of plot configuration. In terms of the choreography, the differences are even bigger. *Pillar of Fire* is told in a 'stream of consciousness' manner that depicts external actions from Hagar's perspective (Jones, 2013: 260). For this reason, in *Pillar*, sex is not explicitly depicted on carnal terms but rather in terms of the psychological states that can be associated with it. MacMillan retains this emotional impact in *The Invitation* but opts for a graphic visualization that reinforces his emphasis on the destructive side of sex.

### ***MacMillan and Ashton***

Within the context of the Royal Ballet, the principal choreographer of the company, Frederick Ashton, had presented sex in his ballets on several occasions in the 1950s, chiefly in *Illuminations* (1950), *Daphnis and Chloe* (1951) and *Tiresias* (1951). The sexual content of these ballets varies in length and intensity but is shaped with a distinctive thematic and stylistic imprint that was Macmillan's closest antecedent for *The Invitation*. *Illuminations* is based on French poet Rimbaud's life and poetry and has a duet between the Poet and Profane Love with several sexually-charged moments, particularly when the Poet lies on top of Profane Love on the floor, wrapping her arms around his head, or when later the two lovers interweave their legs and bend backwards evoking ecstasy (Morris, 2012: 113). In addition, in this duet, the ballerina wears only one pointe shoe, in a probable reference to bisexuality (Morris, 2012: 115). In *Daphnis and Chloe*, copulation is depicted in more symbolical terms (Morris, 2012: 113). In the duet for Daphnis and Lykanion, mentioned here earlier in chapter six for its plausible



inspiration for the climactic moment between the Wife and the Boy in *The Invitation*, 'Lykanion has a furious series of low *attitudes* moving from the back to the front around Daphnis' hips, ending in a quick shudder of *petits battements* held high above Daphnis' (Morris, 2012: 113). Although the veiled reference to orgasm is unequivocal, the rest of the *pas de deux* is less graphic about sex. In *Tiresias*, the depiction of sexual activity is also present. An allegory of bisexuality for Ashton, the ballet is based on the Greek myth where the gods Hera and Zeus discuss whether sex is more satisfying for men or for women (Kavanagh, 1996: 390). They call upon Tiresias, who is transformed into a woman to allow him to experience sex from a female perspective. Even though the theme provides the opportunity for an extensive meditation on sexuality, the ballet did not have a persistent, sexually-charged choreography, either. The references to sex were limited to one duet, with eroticism suggested by a pair of copulating snakes (Vaughan, 1977: 254).

In these three ballets, Ashton's treatment of sex tends to insinuate the sexual activity elegantly, even when the references are evident. His choreography for the erotic duets seems to follow the same general approach as his method for translating Rimbaud's imagery into dance vocabulary in *Illuminations*: it 'must of necessity avoid the obvious' (Ashton cited in Morris, 2012: 103). This attitude probably explains why the effect of his sexually explicit movements only had, if any, 'a covert' intention to shock (Morris, 2012: 120). They created some controversy in London, though. *Illuminations* was condemned for the references to copulation and bisexuality (Morris, 2012: 115-118), and *Tiresias*, for the over-long presence of the subject matter (Nicholas, 2013: 61).

In contrast with Ashton's approach to sex in these ballets, which MacMillan knew well, since he had performed in *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Tiresias* when he was still a dancer (Thorpe, 1985: 15) and had attended the performances of *Illuminations* by New York City Ballet in the 1950 summer season of the company at Covent Garden (Parry, 2009: 94), *The Invitation* presents a different take on the topic. Firstly, the enactment of the sexual acts is explicit, graphic and 'obvious'. In this respect, MacMillan made a very conscious decision of filling the narrative gaps left blank by the literary and film sources. He deliberately inserted in his ballet the sexual acts eschewed on the page and the screen. In the case of the rape, the choice was especially intentional, for he maintained it even after Ninette de Valois, the Director of the company, advised him to remove it (Parry, 2009: 229). Secondly, the type of sexual activity being explicitly enacted and the aspects highlighted by the choreography significantly differ from Ashton's examples. Ashton always remains in the territory of consensual love (Parry, 2009: 225) and, with his graceful and subtle choreographic style, focuses on the pleasurable aspects of sex. MacMillan goes the opposite way. With his 'lyrical, unsentimental and dramatic choreography' (Crisp, 1961: no page), he presents a perverse and forceful version of sex activity. In his proposal, sex can go wrong and can be the source of pain and permanent damage.

MacMillan's explicit and violent thematic treatment of sex in *The Invitation*, as opposed to Ashton's suggestive, graceful and sensual examples, represents a new view on the topic in the context of the Royal Ballet. MacMillan seems to have seriously cogitated on the choice of theme and the type of experience he wanted to expose, for in an interview in *The Times* the day before the première of *The Invitation* he declared that, when creating a ballet, he 'used to think it didn't matter

*what* you sa[y] but *how* you sa[y] it. I've changed my mind *now*, so the movements I use are changing too [emphasis mine]' (in Brinson, 1960a: 9). He added that he was 'sick to death of fairy stories', preferring to move people with 'something they can recognize' (9). This new emphasis on the subject matter of the ballet and on a type of topic that is close to reality, stands, in programmatic terms, in stark contrast to similar meditations expressed by Ashton only two years earlier. In 1958, in a manifesto on 'The Subject Matter of Ballet', Ashton argued that he preferred to move away from 'realistic and pedestrian emotions of an overcharged nature' and from 'current social happenings' (38). Instead, he favoured 'matters of more permanent significance than topical issues . . . , [the] spiritual and eternal rather than [the] material and temporary' (39). *The Invitation*, with MacMillan's newly found approach to the subject matter of ballet, exactly celebrates the aspects rejected by Ashton. The material (sex, rape) and the temporary (family and social circumstances of the characters) are precisely the topics dominating MacMillan's ballet, which are also strongly emphasized with the graphic involvement of the bodies in the sexual acts enacted onstage. It is also significant that Ashton's response to MacMillan's ballet was *The Two Pigeons* (1961), a ballet premièred only a few months after *The Invitation* by the same leading dancers, Lynn Seymour and Christopher Gable, and whose story radically differs from *The Invitation*. With touches of comedy and set in a bohemian, Parisian attic, it unites the two young, loving protagonists, a painter and his model, in a romance that is confronted with several vicissitudes before triumphing tenderly in the end. The unconcealed romanticism of the ballet sprung from its very conception as a Valentine card from Ashton to one of his lovers, delivered the night of the first performance, 14 February (Kavanagh, 1996: 455).

MacMillan's and Ashton's contrasting views on the thematic concerns of ballet, so clearly articulated in their public statements and so vividly represented by *The Invitation* and *The Two Pigeons*, helped MacMillan to position himself in a particular place within the context of the narrative tradition in the Royal Ballet. On a different route than Ashton, he started to emerge as a storyteller with a distinctive, personal voice. He acknowledged Ashton as his master<sup>5</sup> but decidedly began to find his own choreographic path through the choice of tough, controversial topics exposing the darkest side of human experience. He would maintain this thematic inclination for the rest of his career. To the rape in *The Invitation*, he would later add themes such as insanity (*Anastasia* -1967- and -1971-, *Playground* -1979-), drug addiction (*Mayerling* -1978-) and mass violence (*The Judas Tree* -1992-), for instance.

### ***Reception of The Invitation***

Despite its potential for controversy, *The Invitation* was relatively well received and generally welcomed as a fresh addition to the narrative repertory of the Royal Ballet. The explicitness of the rape scene was the aspect that attracted most attention, although the dance reviewers were moderate in their comments about the impact of the scene. None of them expressed concern or distress (Parry, 2009: 230) but some included a direct reference to its shocking effect. Clive Barnes, in an in-depth review at *Dance and Dancers* welcomed its 'controversial aspect... in the all too calm world of British Ballet' (in Barnes et al. 1961: 9). In a similar line, Oleg Kerensky, who labelled the ballet with an 'X-certificate' and for whom the story included not one but two rapes, ardently expressed his 'relief to find a new ballet that tells a powerful and credible human story instead of rehashing a classic myth

or fairy tale' (1960: no page). Rather than emphasising the centrality of sex in the theme of the ballet, other critics stressed the vehemence in the description of the rape. Peter Brinson, reviewing for *The Times*, highlighted MacMillan's 'remarkable power to represent a terrible act of violence with truth and a gruesome sort of beauty but without toppling from the pinpoint of art into the abyss of sensationalism' (1960b: 11). Clement Crisp, in one of the most enthusiastic reviews of the work, praised MacMillan's creation for both formal and thematic reasons, albeit eschewing to place any emphasis on the rape scene. '[*The Invitation*] is a ballet of poetic truth and understanding, unsentimental and without romantic falsification' -he commented-, considering the work 'a study of emotions and ... psychology...' (1961: no page). Crisp too, like Barnes and Kerensky above, stressed the importance of the thematic exploration within the context of the Royal Ballet. For him, *The Invitation* was 'a work of major importance ... for the Royal Ballet... [It] represents a choreographic manner neglected by the company' (1961: no page). Even A. H. Franks, signing a rather negative review in *Dancing Times*, conceded that

'it is right for some choreographers of the 1960's at least to struggle against seemingly insuperable odds to bring ballet out of its isolation from life, so that it can break through the barriers which so harshly confine it to the world of myth [and] legend ...'

(1961: 290)

In contrast to Ashton's repertory, created 'out of myth and comedy, farce and fantasy' and full of 'splendidly theatrical pieces', Franks considers that *The Invitation's* attempt to deal with real characters was a failure, but a brave, welcomed one (1961: 289). The comparison between MacMillan and Ashton that Franks explicitly draws and that the rest of the critics only imply, confirms the perception of MacMillan as a contrasting figure to the principal (and well

established) choreographer of the company. The relative calmness with which the dance press received MacMillan's thematic proposal contrasts, however, with the heated reception from part of the audience. Richard Buckle, reviewer for *The Sunday Times*, echoed the comments from distraught readers, congratulating MacMillan 'on having made a work controversial enough to have aroused debate about an art form often considered safe' (quoted in Parry, 2009: 231). To grasp the nature and the extent of the controversy perceived by some spectators requires a wider contextualization of the ballet within the British Post-War drama, which I provide in the following section.

#### **8.4 British Post-War Drama: MacMillan as an 'Angry Young Man'**

In 1960, the subject matter of sex, in the explicit, violent and incestuous versions presented by MacMillan in *The Invitation*, hardly had any equivalent in the British dance and drama stages. Plays were still subject to censorship and displays of sex (and violence) were particularly scrutinized. From the fifty plays banned between 1946 and 1957, twenty four, the largest group, were banned on account of alleged sexual impropriety, either for obscenity, promiscuity or homosexuality (Shellard, 1999: 10 and Shellard et al., 2004: 180). The success of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* in 1956 has traditionally been identified as the turning point that opened up the London stage to this type of previously unexplored subject matters, eventually leading to the suppression of censorship in the Theatres Act of 1968. Edward Bond's *Saved* (1965), with explicit violence, and Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965), with a homosexual protagonist, are considered the last significant blows to the powers of the censor (Shellard, 1999: 138). The decade between those two

moments produced an increasing number of plays challenging the censorial restrictions, cementing a new phase in the history of British drama which only a few years later would also reach cinema and television. For their rebellious impetus against received conventions, the new generation of playwrights were named by a publicist of the Royal Court Theatre as 'Angry Young Men', later also known as 'New Wave' (Lacey, 1995: 17). Since MacMillan was particularly attracted to the new approaches thriving among those young dramatists and he possibly incorporated, consciously and deliberately, some of their tenets in *The Invitation*, it is worth having a closer look at the characteristics of the period.

### ***Characteristics of the 'Angry Young Men'***

A dissenting attitude was the general characteristic of the 'Angry Young Men', reflected not only in antagonist positions towards established institutions but also in overt challenges to the inherited artistic traditions (Lacey, 1995, 29). In content, this approach led to opening up drama to areas of social and personal experience that had been previously unrepresented (Lacey 1995, 183). In this sense, although class was the topic that received most of the attention at the time, especially since 1959, gender and sexuality were actually equally present in the discourses (Lacey, 1995, 30 and Wyllie, 2009: 7). In form, a 'realist' methodology that stressed verisimilitude at the expense of theatrical artificiality was favoured (Lacey, 1995: 66).

Revisionist historiography of the 1950s British drama (Lacey -1995-, Rebellato -1999-, Shellard -1999-) has stressed that the factors that provoked the emergence and consolidation of the New Wave were complex and multifaceted and cannot be reduced to the impact of Osborne's play in 1956. The foundation of the English

Stage Company that hosted the genesis of *Look Back in Anger* and staged it at its permanent base, the Royal Court Theatre, was certainly a major achievement in the history of the New Wave but other plays, performed by other companies, before and during the English Stage Company, were as radical as *Look Back in Anger* and as decisive in the regeneration of British drama. The visit of Bertolt Brecht's Berliner Ensemble to London in 1956 and the performance, the previous year, of foreign innovative plays like Ionesco's *The Lesson* (1951), Brecht's *Mother Courage* (1939) and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) presented a whole new range of dramatic possibilities to British theatre audiences (Shellard, 1999: 38). In addition, the relocation of Joan Littlewood's small company Theatre Workshop to East London in 1953 fostered an alternative programme of provocative plays, in direct dialogue with the productions at the Royal Court. Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow* (1956), Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958) and the frequent thought-provoking reinterpretations of the classics were the most salient outcomes of Littlewood's pushing-the-boundaries endeavours (Shellard, 1999: 70).

### ***John Osborne and Look Back in Anger (1956)***

Among that combination of circumstances, the premiere of *Look Back in Anger* in 1956 is only a part of the wider picture but it seems that, for MacMillan, it was the key factor for redirecting his creativity towards the artistic agenda of the New Wave. On reflecting on his career retrospectively in the 1980s, the choreographer stated on several occasions that it was his attendance at a performance of *Look Back in Anger* in 1956 that transformed his view on the dramatic possibilities of ballet (Hammond, 2006: 132). 'It made me look at what was happening in dance',



he commented in a letter to Osborne in 1992, and ‘made me see that everything in my world was merely windowdressing’ (quoted in Parry, 2009: 689). In light of these statements, which are in line with the new awareness about the importance of subject matter announced in *The Times* in 1960 (in Brinson, 1960a), the selection of topic for *The Invitation* seems no coincidence, especially after the close contact that he had had with Osborne the previous year. During the initial rehearsals of Osborne’s musical *The World of Paul Slickey* (1959), for which MacMillan created the choreography, both artists spent most evenings together, talking until the small hours (Parry, 2009: 208), and those conversations might have also brought MacMillan closer to Osborne’s dramatic vision. Presenting a rape in the ballet stage seems a deliberate move to bring his dramatic choices closer to Osborne’s and, consequently, to those emerging in the dramatic scene, where Osborne was the most visible voice<sup>6</sup>.

### **Tannhäuser (1955), House of Birds (1955) and The Burrow (1958)**

In perspective, this intense meeting with Osborne in 1959 appears decisive only in bringing to the surface thematic inclinations and choreographic ideas that MacMillan had had from the beginning of his career, even before *Look Back in Anger* in 1956. MacMillan’s choreographic output since 1955 provides evidence that his path towards those unconventional thematic choices and unexpected choreographic proposals had started earlier in his career. In 1955, he created the choreography for the ‘Venusberg’ ballet at the start of Richard Wagner’s opera *Tannhäuser*, in a new production at Covent Garden. In the ballet, Venus tries to keep Tannhäuser in her kingdom by diverting him with dancing and other delights. MacMillan’s choreography portrayed a frankly sexual orgy rather than a romantic

bacchanal, attracting the attention of the press (Parry, 2009: 164). The front-page banner headline of the *Daily Mirror* read 'Has the Lord Chamberlain Seen This?' and the accompanying half-page photo showed 'near-naked satyrs grappling with maidens, apparently naked from the waist up' (Hammond, 2006: 133). MacMillan was pleased with the interest generated by his presentation of sex in his first-ever commission for the Covent Garden Opera (Parry, 2009: 163).

Earlier that year, he had choreographed the one-act ballet *House of Birds*, where violence adds an unexpected twist to a fairy tale based on a Brothers Grimm story. The naïve young victims of a wicked witch, transformed into birds and locked up in cages, return to their human shape only after attacking their oppressor and pecking her to death. The macabre quality that this lethal attack brings to the ballet paradoxically did much to seal MacMillan's reputation as a choreographer (Parry, 2009, 157). It was his second ballet for a professional company (Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet), the first in narrative form and the first where MacMillan presented explicit violence, although it was in the hyperbolic, harm-free and Punch-and-Judy type characteristic of children stories.

*The Burrow*, created in 1958, is possibly the most significant and evident indicative of the closeness of MacMillan's choreographic trajectory to the New Wave before meeting Osborne. This ballet presents a group of characters hidden in a room, afraid of an identified menace that comes from the outside. The dance critic Clive Barnes defined it as 'ballet of atmosphere' and a vivid 'portrayal of fear', a feeling that he found very recognizable in the experience of war undergone a decade earlier (1958: 15). For this engagement with a contemporary concern, Barnes celebrated MacMillan's thematic choice and expressly connected him with the

‘angry’ dramatists (1958: 15). Significantly, this explicit link between MacMillan and the New Wave did not lie in any perceived connection with Osborne or with *Look Back in Anger* but, in broader terms, with the zeitgeist of the era. On a closer look, *The Burrow* seems to share the claustrophobic atmosphere and suffocating trait of Harold Pinter’s plays *The Room* (1957) and *The Dumb Waiter* (1959). Even if MacMillan did not have any of them in mind when he created *The Burrow* (there is no evidence that he viewed them), their common aesthetic goal seems to come from the same artistic context.

### ***The Invitation***

With these previous incursions in the grounds of sex (*Tannhäuser*), violence (*House of Birds*) and impending tragedies (*The Burrow*), *The Invitation* appears as a solid step further into the consolidation of MacMillan’s thematic preferences. The professed influence of *Look Back in Anger* (your play was ‘a bombshell’, MacMillan wrote to Osborne –Parry, 2009: 689) seems to have spurred previous artistic concerns, even if the impact needed some time to be fully absorbed. Possibly, meeting Osborne in 1959 rounded off the process of crystallization, helping MacMillan to fully articulate his choreographic intentions for the press in 1960 and not earlier (‘I have *now* changed my mind’ [my emphasis]) and to materialize them with determination in a ballet that year. In this light, what seems new in the thematic choices of *The Invitation* is the deliberate intention to explore a forceful, harsh topic and make it the main subject matter of a ballet. It is very telling that although he initially hesitated to include the rape (which was not in the first version of the scenario, in spite of featuring prominently in the plot of the novel and the film), he later defended his decision with determination against de Valois’

advice to suppress it. The late transmutation of the Boy into the Girl's Cousin (implying incest in their romance) seems to have sprung from the same deliberate move towards controversial topics. Even filling the narrative gaps of the explicit sexual acts, elliptically narrated in the literary and film sources, possibly serves the same purpose of delving into some adult content that so prominently moves away from the fairy tale base of ballet tradition.

### **The Seven Deadly Sins (1961)**

The ballet that MacMillan created just after *The Invitation*, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1961), with music by Kurt Weill and libretto by Bertolt Brecht, seems to confirm the importance of the 1960/61 season as a catalyst in his career. Dance scholar Helena Hammond (2006) has suggested that that first ballet from 1961 inaugurates the Brechtian ballets in MacMillan repertory. In this group of works, best exemplified by *Isadora* (1981), MacMillan shapes a Brechtian critique of dance history. Hammond traces its seed back to the drama context of London in the 1950s and, possibly, to the influence of Constant Lambert, music director of the Royal Ballet and conductor, in 1933, of the London performances of the original production of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (135). Some of the events in MacMillan's career in the years preceding his own production of the ballet seem to have paved the way for his first incursion in Brechtian territory. In Hammond's review of those previous years, *Tannhäuser* features as an early challenge to conventions, *Look Back in Anger* as the acknowledged source for inspiration and *The World of Paul Slickey* as the most direct forerunner of *Seven Deadly Sins* for its direct satire on politicians, aristocrats and ministers (135). With these antecedents, MacMillan's revival of *The Seven Deadly Sins*, engaged with themes (such as how the lower class

betrays itself in attempting to rise within the class system) and dramatic practices (such as the splitting of the main character into two performers, a singer and a dancer) which were in tune with the transgressive agenda of the period (135). In this light, the correlative creation of *The Invitation* and *The Seven Deadly Sins* suggests that the impact the New Wave had on MacMillan manifested in his practice in more than one way, spurring, at least, the Brechtian group of ballets researched by Hammond, on one hand, and the thematic diversion towards controversial, previously unexplored topics explored here, on the other. Both routes cemented on similar grounds and both took off immediately after MacMillan's artistic collaboration with Osborne.

### ***Anti-establishment Theatrical Practices***

In both cases, there is also an institutional component that sets MacMillan closer to the Angry movement from yet another perspective. As I highlighted earlier, a visible trait of the new generation of playwrights was an anti-hegemonic impetus that imprinted their plays and their commitment to theatre with a dissenting attitude towards the cultural and political establishments (Lacey, 1995: 27). The foundation of the two flagship theatre companies of the era, English Stage Company and Theatre Workshop, was based on the committed intention to provoke a break in the intellectual and artistic culture, moving away from West End commercial practices (Lacey, 1995: 17). Matching this intentionally pursued distance from established conventions and institutions, Hammond (2006) finds particularly fit for MacMillan's first Brechtian ballet that it was created not for the Royal Ballet, but for Western Theatre Ballet, 'an experimental small scale Bristol-based touring company which sought, in the words of its founder-director

Elizabeth West, acknowledgement as the equivalent of a combination of the best efforts of the Royal Court and Theatre Workshop' (2006: 135). *The Seven Deadly Sins* was thus an artistic venture away from the well-established Royal Ballet, in tune with the anti-hegemonic spirit of the New Wave practices. The destabilizing element in *The Invitation* is not, however, that evident and deserves a lengthier reflection, which I carry out in the following paragraphs.

In 1960, MacMillan's position within the Royal Ballet was as complex as Osborne's place in the context of British drama a few years after the premiere of *Look Back in Anger*. When the play was first staged in 1956, Osborne was seen as an anti-hegemonic figure, a clear antagonist to established institutions. However, revisionist historiography of the period (Lacey 1995, Shellard 1999, Rebellato 1999) has highlighted how quickly he and the English Stage Company, which supported and staged his artistic proposals, joined the group of well-established and well-funded institutions. It quickly secured the Arts Council support<sup>7</sup> (Rebellato, 1999: 67), becoming thus firmly linked to the theatrical and cultural establishment, and was championed in the press by the influential critic Kenneth Tynan, a crucial factor in generating the 'Angry' Movement and sponsoring *Look Back in Anger* as its founding and core play (Shellard, 1999: 55). Additionally, the English Stage Company had a strong writer-based approach to drama that favoured and supported the role of the playwright, benefiting the status of Osborne as a leading author. By contrast, Littlewood's Theatre Workshop lacked a similar financial support and institutional endorsement. The Arts Council's funding for the company was meagre in comparison to English Stage Company<sup>8</sup> and eventually led to the dissolution of the company in 1963 (Shellard, 1999: 63). Littlewood also had a different approach to theatre, where the role of the playwright was lessened in

favour to the actors. Material was not written in advance but shaped in rehearsals (Shellard, 1999: 64). In the comparison between the two companies, the Theatre Workshop appears to play the oppositional role, with fewer links to the cultural establishment and to theatrical conventions. Within this context, Osborne, fortified by the writer-approach of the English Stage Company and its more solid financial strength, started the sixties with an ambivalent role that no longer stood as a neatly anti-hegemonic figure.

MacMillan's place in the Royal Ballet in 1960 was similarly mixed. He had the firm support of Ninette de Valois, the Director of the company, but had already had some problems with the Board of the Royal Opera House. In 1959, he proposed to create a new work to Gustav Mahler's final song-cycle *Das Lied von der Erde* (1911) but his request was categorically rejected, partly for practical reasons (it was going to be difficult and expensive to find the right singers and conductor for such a difficult piece of music), partly for artistic motives (ballets should not be mounted to great music that was not written expressly for that purpose) (Parry, 2009: 218). The objections of the Board thwarted MacMillan's intentions but did not diminish de Valois' confidence in him. She had actively defended his proposal as far as her position in the company allowed her (in front of the Ballet Sub-committee, for she was excluded from the discussions of the Board of Directors<sup>9</sup>) and would strengthen MacMillan's position within the Royal Ballet with her full support of *The Invitation*. She deferred a project of her own (the never realized *The Lady of Shalott*) in favour of MacMillan's new ballet (Parry, 2009: 217), allowed him to maintain the graphic presentation of the rape against her own opinion and, more importantly, used the premiere of the ballet to overtly endorse MacMillan's narrative output as a vital part of the narrative tradition of the Royal Ballet. The

opening night at the Royal Opera House in London, on 30 December 1960, was the bicentenary of the death of dancer and choreographer John Weaver (1673-1760) and the occasion received special attention in the programme notes. An article by Philip J. S. Richardson, founding editor of *Dancing Times*, outlined the merits of 'the father of British ballet' and highlighted how his narrative ballet *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717) inaugurated a tradition in England that was still active almost two hundred and fifty years afterwards. It is highly significant that the programme selected by de Valois to celebrate such an important anniversary was an all-MacMillan bill, with *The Invitation* and *Solitaire* (1956). The direct alignment of MacMillan with the lineage initiated by Weaver through that specific bill and on that specific evening looks particularly appropriate to interpret MacMillan's proposal and de Valois's endorsement as a fit response to the conservative decision of the Board a year earlier. In the anti-establishment spirit of the 'Angry' generation, the thematic and choreographic choices presented at Covent Garden on the night celebrating Weaver's career seem an exercise of the artistic freedom unfairly denied earlier and a clear indicator of the direction envisaged by de Valois, via MacMillan, to bring the narrative heritage of the company forwards.

MacMillan's difficult position within the Royal Ballet would remain a constant in his career. He would benefit from its status as a well-established, well-funded institution<sup>10</sup> but would have serious confrontations with the Board over the years. *Song of the Earth* was again rejected in 1964 (Parry, 2009: 297), for instance, and in 1976 his selection of Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* for a ballet was considered sacrilegious and refused (Parry, 2009: 458). Even with those restrictions, he managed to produce, from the inside, ballets that challenged ballet conventions until the end of his career. His last ballet, *The Judas Tree* (1992), included a forceful



exploration of topics such as tyranny, betrayal and violence against women. To compensate for the artistic opportunities missed at the Royal Ballet, he would regularly keep commissions from other companies, such as abovementioned Western Theatre Ballet, John Cranko's Stuttgart Ballet (where, among other ballets, he created *Song of Earth* (1965) and *Requiem* (1976), vetoed in London), and Dance Advance (another small, touring company for whom he created, in 1988, his highly innovative version of *Hamlet, Sea of Troubles*).

### **8.5 Dance Context Reprised: Edwardian Setting and Marriage**

The coincidence of the première of *The Invitation* at Covent Garden with the anniversary of John Weaver and de Valois' implied suggestion that MacMillan was his most direct successor in the company are contextual circumstances that provide evidence of the intended location of the ballet as a (recent, up-to-date) addition to a centuries-old ballet tradition. The work itself contains some narrative elements that point in that direction too. Together with the choices relative to the presentation of sex onstage, which connect the ballet with the 'Angry' movement, there are some other narrative decisions at the story and plot levels that firmly anchor the ballet in dance history. The ballet includes a web of direct allusions to previous ballets with a similar temporal frame (Edwardian times), social stratus (upper-class) and, partially, thematic focus (marriage). Through these references, the story directly points at ballet heritage, even if its unusual choice of topic for the main plot line put some distance from its predecessors. With most of the events and imagery of the ballet borrowed from Colette, Guido and Eduardo Torre Nilsson, it is not without significance that two out of the three aspects of the story

that bring out the connection with ballet past (the temporal setting and the marriage in a secondary plot line) do not come from any of the source novels or films but solely from MacMillan's imagination. By adding those two features of his own invention to the storyworld that he largely shapes with events and traits from other sources, he explicitly places the story within his own imaginary and artistic tradition. These choices take the ballet away from the bleak urban setting of *Look Back in Anger*, its working-class protagonist and Osborne's focus on male dissatisfaction. They locate the story within familiar traits and references to ballet audiences, so that MacMillan's new attitude to the subject matter of ballet does not dispense with its centuries-old conventions but elaborates on them. In order to expose *The Invitation's* engagement with dance tradition, it is worth unpacking its connections with those other ballets directly alluded to in its content.

The two ballets with an Edwardian setting and with a focus on upper-class marriage which more vividly resonate in *The Invitation* are Antony Tudor's *Jardin aux lilas* (1936) and Frederick Ashton's *A Wedding Bouquet* (1937). I have already discussed here MacMillan's familiarity with the former, which inspired several key steps and motifs of the choreography for the Husband/Wife relationship. Ashton's ballet was not unknown to him either. It was premiered in 1937 and frequently performed by the Royal Ballet during the late thirties and early forties. It came back to the repertory at the turn of the decade, with regular performances in 1949, 1950 and 1951<sup>11</sup> (Bland, 1981: 287). Like *Jardin*, it looks back to the Edwardian era and its disjointed narrative revolves around a wedding. It is based on Gertrude Stein's experimental play *They Must. Be Wedded. To Their Wife* (1931) and has a self-reflective conception that combines comedy with an underlying sadness in the characters (Morris, 2012: 98).

Dance historian Sally Banes (1998) considers that *Jardin* and *Bouquet* share a similar stance on Edwardian marriage. In those ballets, both Tudor and Ashton (both with British origins and births at the turn of the twentieth century) look back at marriage conventions of the older generation, at least of the upper and middle classes, to question the dominant marital values (184). They particularly challenge the idea that marriage, whether it be affectionate or loveless, is a woman's only option in life (185). Tudor, with a stream-of-consciousness narrative mode, focuses on Caroline's agony at marrying the man she does not love (Jones, 2013) and Ashton, with a fractured narrative that mirrors Stein's fragmented prose, builds a satire that encodes unhappiness beneath a façade of comedy (Morris, 2012). Banes finds that both proposals centre the story on the subjective (unhappy) experience of the union, following the tradition of plots with dysphoric marriages in Western dance history. Opposed to the euphoric marriage plots epitomised by Marius Petipa's *Sleeping Beauty* (1890) (where marriage is funded by love, bonds equal partners, preserves individuality and fulfils an important social function, ensuring the continuity of the monarchy –Banes, 1998: 59), these anti-marriage stances expose the complex nature of the marital relation, which might be endorsed by social conventions and positive for the community but can be emotionally devastating for the spouses (Banes, 1998: 212). An earlier example is Bronislava Nijinska's *Les Noces* (1923), where marriage is ruled by weighty social forces that leave no space for personal agency. The wedding in the title of the ballet is not a festive celebration but a gloomy day for the bride (Banes, 1998: 108)<sup>12</sup>.

The Edwardian dysphoric weddings in *Jardin* and *Bouquet* echo in MacMillan's Husband/Wife unhappy relationship. The examination proposed in *The Invitation*

focuses on the female experience too but moves away from the prenuptial party and wedding day presented, respectively, by Tudor and Ashton. MacMillan's couple has already gone down the line of the marital coexistence hinted at in those antecedents and therefore his exploration goes further into the female suffering so intensely exposed earlier (especially through Tudor's distressed Caroline). The Wife's bitter situation also encompasses psychological grief but, additionally, verbal harassment, physical abuse and an unfulfilling sexual life too. These new aspects introduced in MacMillan's proposal place the emphasis on the material and bodily facets of the union, extending the inherited view to the details of the daily, intimate contact of the spouses. Not coincidentally, the areas of experience explored and the approach to present them do not differ from the narrative treatment of the main plotline of the ballet. As in the depiction of the Girl's rape, the Wife's marital agony is presented as multifaceted (involving psychological, emotional and physical damage) and as, to a great extent, the product of the hypocritical values governing the Edwardian storyworld. Hidden under a façade of good manners, the Wife's individual tragedy is, like the Girl's, overlooked by the rest of the characters and unsentimentally exposed to the audience. This insistence on unveiling a tough female experience both in the main and in a secondary plotline of the ballet<sup>13</sup> fortifies the thematic focus of the ballet on unsightly aspects of women's lives and duplicates the approach that presents the material to the audience without eschewing any details of the physical and the mental pains suffered by the characters. In both cases, the particulars of the agony are forcefully and openly unfolded onstage. And since the Wife's story directly alludes to Ashton's and, especially, to Tudor's previous interpretations of the topic, MacMillan's thematic and stylistic choices are presented in direct dialogue with

them. His dysphoric exploration of Edwardian marriage delves deeper into its negative impact on the wife, an aspect only hinted at in Ashton's satirical account of the wedding and delineated in psychological terms only in Tudor's exposure of Caroline's interiority. To Ashton's fractured, self-reflective proposal and to Tudor's stream-of-consciousness-like ballet, MacMillan adds a close-to-the-bone treatment of the subject matter, largely inspired by the tenets of the New Wave but intentionally connected, through these allusive references, to his acknowledged dance influences.

Importantly, the story of the Wife has also a positive facet. The narrative elements that frame her extramarital affair with the Boy are the temporal location of the story at carnival time (discussed in detail in chapter four) and the spatial setting in a tropical country. That is, not a place at the heart of England but away from the island. This distance from the ruling centre works within the world of the story in the same direction as the unshackling carnival atmosphere. It weakens the pressure of the social mores on the characters, particularly on the Wife, who enjoys her affair with no guilt, shame or regret (she only shows some signs of fear to be discovered once the encounter is over). The tropical spatiality of the story ('the hothouse atmosphere' alluded to in the scenario) recalls some earlier narratives in dance history that had also placed the portrayal of liberating (and sometimes also forbidden) sex in a spatial location somewhat alien, out of the ordinary. A well-known example is Michel Fokine's *Schéhérazade* (1910), placed in the Orient and with an orgy scene between the Shah's wives and the Negro slaves, famously performed by Ida Rubinstein and Vaslav Nijinsky in the two leading roles (Garafola, 1998: 34).

The choice of a space with certain exotic traits as the background for sexual activity represented in positive terms is also present in Frederick Ashton's mythological Greece for *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Tiresias*. In both cases, the representation of sexual activity has some unconventional traits for the spectators of the time (Lykaenion is a married woman and Tiresias has sex with both men and woman). One of the dramatic tactics to present sexual content is to choose a spatial dimension for the action that is also far from the audience location. *The Invitation* uses, to some extent, a similar strategy. Although the spatial location retains the realist flavor of Guido's and Colette's novels (and therefore the Edwardian traits and values are introduced with verisimilitude), it still leaves some room for liberation. It is not an exotic, mythological or fantastic world, yet it provides, with the tropical backdrop, an excuse for the relaxation of the moral codes. Following the dance convention exemplified by those earlier ballets, it evokes a world with a certain geographical distance from the Great Britain for which the ballet was originally created.

## **8.6 The Title Reprised**

The arguments just expressed close the investigation of the main narrative aspects of the ballet in this thesis. The inside out examination that I have proposed here has travelled from the preparatory material to the contextual circumstances surrounding MacMillan's main narrative choices. There is a final task to perform, however. In chapter three, I postponed the interpretation of the title, to which I return in these closing paragraphs with the purpose of sharing a post-performance reflection with the reader. The ambiguity of the title, which prior to the ballet adds

very little information about the story about to unfold, might cause real puzzlement after the performance, since any positive expectations created by its meaning seem to disappear as the curtains close on the lonely, damaged Girl onstage. The spectator is then left with the challenge of trying to piece together the story and the title. In the absence of any obvious correlation between them, the possibilities for interpretation are open and left to the speculations of the curious and engaged spectator. As a last narrative strategy of the ballet, it offers the audience an opportunity to reflect on the tragedy presented.

Among the multiple, possible elucidations, the critic of *The Times* in 1960 chose to understand the title as an invitation issued to the audience to go to the theatre and view the ballet. 'An Invitation Worth Accepting', he titled his review, and then commented on the merits of the ballet, recommending his readers not to miss it, even if he found some flaws in it (Brinson, 1960b: 11). A. H. Franks, in *Dancing Times*, placed the interpretation in the area of the story of the ballet. For him, the title referred to a concrete event of the plot, namely, the invitation, not explicitly narrated but assumed in the scene of the arrival of the adults, that the guests of the Girl's house have received to attend the ball in the evening (1961: 288). Still within the narrative, it is plausible to understand that the interlude performed by the acrobats is an open invitation for the guests to abandon the etiquette and indulge in sexual activity. In a similar line, the invitation to waltz, long pondered by the Husband in No. 9, can be perceived as an offer to dance that later acquires the symbolical meaning of an invitation to have sex when a few waltz bars in the music introduce the intimate meeting not only in this affair but in the Wife/Boy too.

All the interpretations that place the reflection on events in the plot involve an ironical connection with the denouement of the story. Whether the invitation refers to summoning the guests to the house, to inciting general promiscuous behaviour or to succumbing to the seduction of an adult partner, the prospect of an enjoyable evening is reversed by the actual outcome of the action. In all these cases, the title functions as a narrative strategy that generates expectations in one direction only to subvert them afterwards, 'increasing the attention of the audience and the informational value of the deviating elements' (Pfister, 1988: 42). Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* (1951) uses this strategy, for the title refers to an event that ends unexpectedly, with the teacher killing the pupil. It is not improbable that MacMillan followed Ionesco's example, because he greatly admired his play when he viewed its first London staging in 1958<sup>14</sup> (Seymour et al., 1984: 75).

The strategic reversal of the audience's expectations becomes particularly evident in the case of the 'invitation to waltz', which plays with certain ballet conventions that help intensify the subversion. At first, the initiative of the Husband taking the Girl to the centre of the dancefloor might be perceived as an innocuous invitation to waltz that just spurs the Girl's infatuation. The situation might seem familiar to the ballet-goers, for it is not very different from the evocative waltz in Fokine's popular work *Le Spectre de la rose* (1911)<sup>15</sup>. In this *pas de deux*, created for Vaslav Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina to a piece of music that also has the word 'invitation' in its title, Carl Maria von Weber's waltz *Invitation to the Dance* (sometimes translated in French as *Invitation à la valse*), a young lady revives memories of a waltz from the previous evening (Jones, 2013: 138). Her reminiscences attach an intensely romantic value to the whirling steps performed in the arms of her dancing partner (Jones, 2013: 139). The central waltz in *The*



*Invitation* is initially introduced similarly, especially because the emphasis of the scene is placed in the Girl's naïve reactions.

The subsequent appearances of the waltz in the music of the ballet, however, disappoint those romantic expectations. A first move away from them takes place when a few non-diegetic waltz bars mark the first advances of the Wife in her duet with the Boy. With her seductive movements, the 'invitation to waltz' ceases to point at an idealized, amorous prospect and instead introduces an actual sex encounter. Again a dance reference might reverberate in the audience. In Robbins' *The Cage* a waltz sounds in the music (Stravinsky's *Violin Concerto in D*) when the Novice meets the Second Intruder, with whom she will subsequently have sex onstage. The Wife/Boy carnal meeting is a similar corollary of the waltz introductory steps in *The Invitation* but it is not the last symbolic reversal in the ballet. The third occurrence of the waltz will complete the shift away from romanticism, for the scene of the rape starts with a waltz tune too. On this occasion, it is the Girl who initiates the waltzing movements, trying to reproduce the dance that she and the Husband have danced together earlier. Her intentions are violently thwarted in a final reversal of the romantic connotations of the waltz.

The sustained reference to 'the invitation' in the title through these three instances of an 'invitation to waltz' spread across the ballet does not seem coincidental. MacMillan specifically requested a waltz from Seiber for these three particular moments of the story, as it is reflected in the scenarios that both discussed together during the creative process. This demand provides evidence of an intended cohesive tie among these three key events in the plot, which in succession uses the same musical cue to a different action onstage (an actual waltz of a naïve

adolescent, the onset of a sexual act and the beginning of a rape). Although it is impossible to know whether MacMillan sought to allude to *Spectre* and exploit its popularity to present his story as a reversal of that well-known antecedent or not, it is possible to understand that this traceable aural chain is part of a narrative strategy that progressively discloses an unexpected twist in the story. In consonance with (and, plausibly, in connection to) the title, the waltz discloses a hidden dark side beneath its surface.

## 8.7 Final Considerations

The allusive content of *The Invitation* and the circumstances surrounding its creation appear to suggest that MacMillan's main thematic choices for the ballet were highly relevant for the consolidation of his craftsmanship as a storyteller. Before this ballet, he had touched upon the topics of sex and violence but had never explored them with the resolution evidenced in *The Invitation*. His decision to focus his ballet on a rape and, collaterally, on a quarrelling and unhappy marriage represented a thematic tour de force towards a type of subject matter that exposed bleak aspects of human experience. Viewing *Look Back in Anger* in 1956 and meeting Osborne in 1959 are likely to have been the driving causes for that change. Its presentation was, however, tightly interwoven with dance references. Petit, Tudor, Robbins and Ashton had all presented sex onstage in the late 1940s and early 1950s and MacMillan honoured them by inserting a wide range of quotations from their ballets. References to Tudor and his Edwardian bride-to-be in *Jardin aux Lilas* feature visibly in *The Invitation*, suggesting that MacMillan's imaginary was purposely built upon that familiar antecedent from

dance history. The ingredient of resentment that he added to that model as well as the violence that he proposed for the topic of sex represented a forceful and vigorous turn to the tradition that he inherited. His 'angry' proposal opened the Covent Garden ballet stage to a type of subject matter previously unrepresented, taking the Royal Ballet's repertory forwards and, eventually, further than drama, for such a violent and sexually explicit topic was still censored for plays in 1960 in Great Britain.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the guiding drive of this study, posed at the beginning, it is now possible to extract some conclusions about the main narrative aspects of the *The Invitation*. The core theme of sex articulates many facets of the narrative. The plot has a central line that follows the Girl's process of sexual discovery and a subplot that organizes the Boy's first sexual experience with a similar pattern: first signs of sexual awakening, infatuation, flirtation and, finally, intercourse. In both cases, the climax is followed by a coda with a direct referent to that peak, for it depicts the effects of the sexual encounters on the adolescents. This skeleton underpinning the story is framed within the background of the sexual values governing the social milieu of the characters. The Mother's strict sexual codes, the Acrobats' sexually-charged play and the promiscuous behaviour of the Guests during the party are all events that precede, accompany and explain the development of the Girl's and the Boy's story.

The spatio-temporal dimensions of the story reflect the topic of sex too, albeit in symbolical terms. Each of the spaces in which the events take place is figuratively attached to a couple, reflecting the dominant traits of each relationship. Temporally, those events happen in the morning, afternoon, evening and night, respectively, the tenor of the phase of the day thus matching the tone of the sexual encounter. In terms of characterization, sexuality is a trait explored in the conception of all the roles, with an important place in the delineation of the individual features of each character. Crucially, it is developed not only in physical but also in psychological and emotional terms.

The story that explores sex with such insistence is largely shaped after the literary and film sources of the ballet. Most of the events of the story come from Colette's novella and Eduardo Torre Nilsson's film (inspired by Beatriz Guido's novel) and many moments of the choreography are directly inspired in episodes, actions and gestures described in those sources. Other artistic references seem to have helped MacMillan articulate his expressive dance vocabulary too, such as Francisco de Goya's paintings or choreography from Antony Tudor, Frederick Ashton and George Balanchine. His own choreographic choices, however, present a variety of approaches to narrative expressivity. In general terms, it is possible to highlight his recurrent use of movement and musical motifs that evolve as the story progresses, adding new nuances of meaning to the connotations initially carried. The most salient examples of this strategy are gestures like the 'head to heart' (present in all three relationships involving the Boy and/or the Wife), tunes like the waltz (used in the two adult/young seductions) and choreographic material like the lifts, whose symbolic meaning, exploiting the up/down spatial contrast, links the four relationships depicted in the ballet in their common tenor of explicit explorations of sexuality.

A strategy that also features frequently in the ballet is the manipulation of the temporal dimension of the 'discourse' to stress the importance of an event in the plot. The deceleration in the pace of the narration is achieved through the stillness, slow-motion or unhurried gestures of the dancers, sometimes reflected in the slower tempo of the music too. The time suspension rarely affects the whole action on stage but rather aims to focus the attention of the audience on the actions of a particular character or on a group of characters within a multi-action scene, as in the first meeting of the four central characters, framed within the arrival of guests

to the Girl's house. The impression of time frozen is, at times, accompanied by the spatial arrangement of the characters on the stage in a way that allows the visual composition of a *tableaux vivant* or quasi-*tableaux vivant*. The most vivid example is the last confrontation of the four main characters, where this spatio-temporal strategy achieves, in conjunction with an evocative musical recapitulation, the narrative summary of the story.

Beyond the choreography, music and design play an important role in narrating the story. The music, by Mátyás Seiber, has an overall atmospheric function, and contributes significantly to two areas of the narrative: foreshadowing and characterization. The main signs of a looming disaster in the ballet come from the distressing warnings sent by the music, especially against the actions of the Husband, and many of the inner feelings and external traits of the characters are aurally delineated. The angst of the Wife is, for instance, first exposed by the oboe, and the innocence and bright spirit of the Girl is rendered by the flute.

Nicholas Georgiadis' set and costumes designs are the main indications of the temporal setting of the story in the Edwardian era and are important elements for characterization. The light fabric, short length and bright colours of the costumes of the Girl reflect her young age, tender nature and even her evolution in the story. Her first costume, with sunny spells of yellow at the beginning of the story, contrasts with the pale blue gown that she wears at the end, mirroring her transition from a trusting adolescent to a damaged woman. The high-necked costumes of the Wife comment on her personality too. They highlight her elegance and, in some interpretations of the role, also suggest her feelings of entrapment in her marriage.

The techniques for characterization, encompassing more perspectives than the aural and visual aspects just mentioned, are one of the facets of the examination of characters carried out in this study. As an essential part of the narrative, characters have received particular attention here, not only from the perspective of characterization, but also from the point of view of their conception and the dancers' contribution. The main conclusion that could be extracted from that analysis is that their configuration is perhaps the strongest asset of MacMillan's craftsmanship as a storyteller in *The Invitation*. Three out of the four major roles (the Girl, the Boy and the Wife) are richly multifaceted characters, with depth in their conception and a long trajectory in the story. The frequent exposition of their interiority helps bring out nuances of their personality and feelings. This is one of the functions of the signature step for the Husband and Wife and is the main expressive aim of the Girl's erratic floor patterns after the rape, for instance. The discourse time allotted to the events framing the story is also a considerable factor in helping to delineate dynamic characters that evolve in the story. The unhurried portrayal of the family and social stratum at the beginning of the ballet provides a background that depicts their initial traits, values and fears. The narrative attention to the consequences of the events of the day in the closing number contributes to the completion of their evolution in the story, highlighting the transformations they have gone through during the timeframe of the ballet.

The four dancers who created the roles (Lynn Seymour, Christopher Gable, Anne Heaton and Desmond Doyle) decisively contributed to shaping their parts, especially Seymour. Among the significant acting and choreographic resources that she added to the repertory of expressive gestures embedded in the choreography, this study has unearthed the 'young feet' and the 'silent scream'. Additionally, a

special focus has been placed on her acting skills, which gave an intense dramatic dimension to her technical abilities, permeating all her movements with potent expressivity. She is possibly the only performer who has portrayed the evolution of the Girl from childhood to adulthood with pristine clarity and measured precision. Seymour's interpretation in the original production was also largely responsible for the good reception of the ballet in the press. Despite its controversial topic, *The Invitation* was unanimously praised for the brilliance of the dramatic performances of the original cast, particularly Seymour's.

A second significant aspect stressed by the opening night reviews and investigated here was the brave choice of subject matter, considered a fresh addition to the repertory of the Royal Ballet. The inclusion of violence and explicit sex represented a considerable expansion of the thematic possibilities of dance in a time where both topics were banned from drama stages in the UK. MacMillan's skills and confidence as a storyteller had been well nurtured by Ashton's and de Valois's mentoring since the beginning of his career but it has been suggested here that it was possibly the close contact with John Osborne the previous year that finally spurred his thematic choices for this ballet. In line with the post war drama interest in exploring new areas of experience, MacMillan turned to sex and rape in *The Invitation*. Additionally, this study has also concluded that other topical aspects of the story, such as the Edwardian setting and the unhappy marriage, anchored the ballet firmly within dance tradition. A web of allusions to other ballets which were particularly familiar to the audience of the time (Tudor's *Jardin aux lilas* and Ashton's *A Wedding Bouquet*, prominently) suggests that not only did MacMillan share the thematic concerns of the British dramatists of the period but he also respected the dance heritage, in which he decisively rooted his ballet. Through this



combination of a new approach to subject matter with familiar references to well-known dance antecedents, the ballet rests firmly upon the ballet tradition at the same time that it develops its dramatic possibilities in new narrative directions.

Taken together, all these findings about MacMillan's narrative strategies and approach to storytelling in *The Invitation* provide some insights for its understanding as a story narrated in the form of dance. Nevertheless, these conclusions do not exhaust all the possibilities for a critical examination of the ballet, not even on narrative matters. Because the emphasis has been placed here on MacMillan's choices as a storyteller and, in particular, on his decisions in relation to the configuration of the story, there are other aspects that have been covered in less detail but deserve greater attention. The role of the dancers, for instance, has been only partially addressed. The original dancers of the ballet have received particular consideration, with some suggestions as to how their characteristics, training and skills might have informed MacMillan's choreography. A glimpse of how those dancers and later performers have interpreted the roles has also been offered here but this could be expanded with a larger survey of their contribution to the ballet, both in terms of their preparatory work in the studio and their performance choices onstage.

Likewise, there are some facets of the ballet that could be examined with other theoretical lenses, complementing the conclusions presented here. The prominence that female characters and female experience possess in the ballet could be examined in greater detail with feminist theory and methods, for instance. The areas of female experience explored, the narrative treatment given to them and the portrayal of gender relations are issues the examination of which, under a

critical feminist perspective, could lead to a better understanding of MacMillan's approach to the female universe. His choices in this ballet could provide arguments to support the revaluation of his choreographic output, addressing, and perhaps contesting, the dominant perception of his ballets as misogynistic.

Beyond *The Invitation*, the narrative strategies exposed here are intended to spur further studies on MacMillan's craftsmanship as storyteller. This study has suggested some links between the narrative choices in *The Invitation* and later ballets in his repertory. The spatial arrangement and temporal suspension in the multi-action ball at the Girl's house directly correlates with the spatial and temporal organization in 'Dance of the Knights' at the Capulet's ball in *Romeo and Juliet* (1965). The visual recapitulation of the story through brief *tableaux vivants*, with several instances in *The Invitation*, features frequently in later ballets, such as *The Judas Tree* (1992), which closes with this compositional device. The symbolical use of the spatial up/down contrast in the increasingly erotic lifts is antecedent of the lift-dominated choreography that progressively turns earth-orientated as the story of the protagonist's decadence and fall is unfolded in *Manon* (1974). The rough support and waist-level lifts of Prince Rudolph with his wife and with his mistress in *Mayerling* (1978) have their origins in the Husband's abrupt behaviour and sexual manners with the Wife and with the Girl in *The Invitation*. The shift towards tough topics initiated by the explicit rape in this ballet would be followed by the unsettling subject matter explored in later ballets, such as *Anastasia* (1967 and 1971), *Mayerling* (1978) and *The Judas Tree*, for instance. As these and other examples highlighted in this thesis suggest, MacMillan tended to favour certain narrative choices, maintaining and developing similar devices across his career.

Further research on them will contribute to present a wider picture of his narrative style.

In addition to the implications for MacMillan's repertory, this study also sheds some light on methodological terms. Dance narratology as a methodological tool to investigate instances of narrative dance has revealed a fertile ground for future research. The first methodological approach proposed here has attempted to delineate the two pillars of the discipline: the status of dance as a distinctive narrative genre (based upon Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer's model of diegetic and mimetic narrativity) and a definition of narrative (David Herman's) that both encompasses media other than novels and includes an element of experientiality, as conceptualized by Monika Fludernik. In dance, it has been proposed, following Fludernik's argument for drama, that experientiality is embodied by characters on stage, the most distinctive element of dance narratives. On the basis of these two conclusions, this thesis has addressed some of the methodological challenges posed by dance in comparison with other narrative media, testing the usefulness of the main notions and principles of narratology for dance research. Some of those concepts (story, plot, story and 'discourse' time, story space and characters) have proved readily and/or easily applicable to dance but others (narrative units and 'discourse' space) have only tentatively been tested and remain open for future refinements. Additionally, in order to investigate the value of those narrative notions for dance research, this dissertation has opted for width instead of full depth. It has therefore used a wide range of concepts and principles and has illustrated how they can be analytically productive beyond the non-technical usage that currently dominates dance research. A more detailed and intense study of each concept could reveal the complete extent of its value for dance theory and

analysis. Deeper explorations of narratological principles could enrich and take dance research to new grounds of complexity.

From the opposite direction, dance theory together with multimedia studies and choreomusical analysis has proved to be an invaluable tool to examine the specialities of a narrative in the medium of dance. In the intersection with narratology, dance and related disciplines have provided useful analytical methods to illuminate the processes and strategies used by a dance narrative to convey a story through a combination of kinetic, aural and visual cues. The basis for understanding narrative dance has been built upon Janet Adshead's model for dance analysis, Daniel Albright's figures of consonance and dissonance (here transmuted into semantic narrative units), Nicholas Cook's metaphor model for multimedia analysis, and Stephanie Jordan's conceptualization of the choreomusical relationship as one of mutual implication and interdependence (here applied in terms of meaning rather than in the structural terms). The analytical procedures stemming from those sources have been widely used here to flesh out the examples supporting the arguments. They have been particularly useful for the illustration of the narrative strategies relative to the spatio-temporal coordinates of the choreography, to the techniques of characterization and to the role of each of the elements of the narrative in the narration of the story. That is, they have played a significant role in depicting, interpreting and evaluating the aspects of the narrative that take the discussion away from the level of the story and the plot, and move it towards the process of narration. They have also exposed some areas underexplored by narrative theory, such as 'discourse' space. The future contributions that those disciplines are able to produce in all these areas will be essential to provide the analytical tools and theoretical background

necessary to enrich narrative theory with the peculiarities of the centuries-old tradition of dance narratives and with, eventually, new angles of usage for its conceptual toolbox. In the context of the existing research on narrative across media, dance studies scholars have the challenge to lead the discussion that widens the scope of narrative theory, develops some of its concepts and takes dance away from the marginal role that it currently possesses.

## NOTES

### Notes to Chapter 1: Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth MacMillan entered in the Royal Ballet in 1945 to train as a dancer. After a brief dancing career, he became a resident choreographer for the company in 1955, just after his fifth choreography. From 1966 to 1970 he was artistic director of the Deutsche Oper in West Berlin. On his return to London in 1970, he was appointed artistic director of the Royal Ballet, a role that he played for seven years. He stayed in the company as a principal choreographer until his death in 1992 (Parry, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> In Wood (1960), BRB (1983) and RB (1996).

<sup>3</sup> The work had been previously presented by the touring company earlier that year in Oxford, Bristol, Southsea and Brighton (Currie, 1961: 223).

<sup>4</sup> See Bailey (1990) and McCarthy (no date), respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Barnes et al. (1961), Corathiel (1961) and Currie (1961) are particularly rich in photographs.

<sup>6</sup> In this thesis, I consistently refer to the two companies founded by Ninette de Valois with the names that they possess nowadays, the Royal Ballet and the Birmingham Royal Ballet. The reader should be aware, however, that their names and status changed several times over the years. The Royal Ballet was the Vic-Wells Opera Ballet (or simply Vic-Wells Ballet) from 1931 to 1941, when it changed to Sadler's Wells Ballet. In 1956, the company acquired royal charter and became the Royal Ballet (Bland, 1981: 23, 66 and 117). The second company opened, as a separate troupe within the main company, with the name Sadler's

Wells Opera Ballet (Bland: 1981, 208) and was known as Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1947 and as Ballet Touring Company (also the Touring Company) since 1956. The name was again changed to the New Group in 1970 and to Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet in 1976 (Bland, 1981: 209). The company moved to Birmingham in 1990, when it started to use its current name, Birmingham Royal Ballet (Anderson, 2006: 256), acquiring full independence from the Royal Ballet in 1997 (Roy, 2009). Since both companies were ultimately ruled by the same administrative directorship until 1997, I also use here the expression 'Royal Ballet' in a wide sense, covering both companies as two branches of the same tree.

## **Notes to Chapter 2: Methodology**

<sup>1</sup> In *The Republic*, Plato differentiated between literary genres that directly imitate speech via the characters' dialogues and monologues (mimesis) and those that use utterances attributable to the author (diegesis). In *Poetics*, Aristotle introduced the distinction between the totality of events taking place in a depicted world and those narrated in the plot or *muthos*, chosen and arranged according to aesthetic considerations (Meister, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Barthes ([1966] 1977) was not the first or the only structuralist who acknowledged the variety of narrative forms. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) roots her transmedial narratology in a statement made by Claude Bremond in 1964, for instance.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of general studies of narrative across different media see Ryan (2004), Herman (2007a), Hühn et al. (no date) and Thon et al. (2014).

<sup>4</sup> For Genette's own explanation of his terminology, see (1980: 30) and (1988: 16).

<sup>5</sup> An event is ‘a change of state, creating a more or less salient and lasting alteration in the storyworld’ (Herman, 2007c: 277). A storyworld is ‘the world evoked by a narrative text or discourse; a mental representation of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why and in what fashion in the world for whose reconstruction a narrative artifact (text, film, etc.) provides a blueprint’ (Herman, 2007c: 282).

<sup>6</sup> The exploration of this question, leading to the design of a specific methodology tailor made for narrative in dance, remains a fascinating open path to be researched in the future.

<sup>7</sup> This vision is still in use, as Marie-Laure Ryan detects in some of the contributors to her collection of essays *Narrative across Media* (2004: 15).

<sup>8</sup> For an excellent summary of the history and development of the academic discussion on film narration see Kuhn et al. (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan’s definition is another significant example of a concept of narrative including a mental dimension (2004: 9 and 2007: 29).

<sup>10</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the set of gestures, mime conventions and movements that substitute spoken language in dance. An excellent analysis of the relationship between mime, dance and language in the context of the eighteenth century ballet d’action can be found in Nye (2011) and an enlightening study of the resemblance between the use of expressive gestures in nineteenth-century Italian *coreodramma* and the individual and distinctive language of gesture in Ashton, different from the gestural recitatives of nineteenth-century ballets, is included in Poesio (1996).



<sup>11</sup> In parallel with the contraposition between mimetic and diegetic narrativity, I differentiate between a diegetic narrator, who tells the story with words, and a mimetic narrator, who enacts the act of telling.

<sup>12</sup> In this thesis, characters are defined as ‘human or human-like entities that exist and participate in a storyworld’ (Margolin, 2007: 66). I will expand the theoretical background of this essential element of narrative in chapter seven, where I will examine the characters of *The Invitation* in detail.

<sup>13</sup> Ryan draws this difference between ‘being’ a narrative and ‘possessing’ narrativity in relation to her definition of narrative. I have here adapted her conceptual reflections to Herman’s notion of narrative. I will provide more details about Ryan’s model later in this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> I do not reproduce it here but refer the reader to Abbot (2007) and Herman (2007b) for a good summary of this debate.

<sup>15</sup> Schmid borrows this conclusion from Proust’s own theory of translation (2013: 185).

<sup>16</sup> Although Ryan has extensively written about cognitive narratology, she is critical about the outcomes of the discipline. Against the tendency to conceive cognitive narratology as a matter of borrowing ready-made concepts from the cognitive sciences and applying them top-down to texts, she argues in favour of a cognitive approach to narrative that trust the ability of the researcher to figure out how the mind creates, decodes and uses stories (2015). For more details about her critical examination of the various approaches to cognitive narrative and her proposal for a productive collaboration among disciplines, see her article ‘Narratologie et sciences cognitives: un relation problématique\*’ (2015).

<sup>17</sup> Not all these elements are always present in a dance piece and others might also be used, such as language, for instance, which might appear in the form of lyrics of a song, words spoken by a voice-over narrator, phrases recited by an actor/dancer or letters written in the set.

<sup>18</sup> Janet Adshead has later published under the names of Janet Adshead-Lansdale and Janet Lansdale. In this section, I always refer to her as Adshead but the reader should be aware that in order to locate her works in the bibliography, she is Adshead in 1988, Adshead-Lansdale in 1999 and 2007, and Lansdale in 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Adshead uses the terms 'reading', 'reader', 'texts', and all their variants in a wide sense, which includes 'viewing dance', 'spectator' and 'dance performances', respectively (1999: xiii).

<sup>20</sup> I need to make two precisions to this notion. Firstly, I must clarify that the temporal duration of these units is only theoretically 'at a moment in time'. The nature of dance as a medium that has a temporal dimension implies that any perceived moment inevitably encompasses the passing of time (even if only a few instants). Secondly, I am aware that the term 'unit' also possesses strong structural connotations in linguistics and narratology. Morphemes are morphological units in words, words are grammatical units in sentences, and sentences are discourse units in texts or utterances, for instance. In narratology, the expression 'narrative units' has been used with similar intentions too. The segmentation of narratives in smaller units that unravel their structural composition has been attempted with different methodologies and purposes, none of them with a widely accepted success. In the most basic proposal, narratives are composed of parts, books, chapters, acts, scenes and paragraphs (Meister, 2005: 382). The temporal and

spatial constraints of this thesis prevent a longer and deeper conceptualization of the expression 'narrative unit', addressing the temporal and structural implications of the term expressed here. I leave those questions open for further research.

<sup>21</sup> In this section, I maintain Jordan's terminology, who contraposes music and dance as two different media. In this thesis, music is understood as one of the components of dance.

### **Notes to Chapter 3: Story and Plot**

<sup>1</sup> Also known by its title in English, *The Ripening Seed* (1923).

<sup>2</sup> Original title in Spanish, *La casa del ángel* (1954).

<sup>3</sup> The film was originally released in Britain under the title *The Game of Love* but it is currently better known by its original title in French.

<sup>4</sup> *La casa del ángel* (1957), in Spanish.

<sup>5</sup> I will offer more details about this aspect later in chapter six.

<sup>6</sup> As I will explain with more detail in chapter four, an analepsis occurs when events that happen in the order ABC are told in the order BCA or BAC (Herman, 2007c: 275). The equivalent in a film is a flashback.

<sup>7</sup> The first draft of the scenario reflected that these strict moral values sprung from the Catholic religious beliefs of the family, like in Guido's novel (MacMillan et al., 1960). The second draft only mentions 'a strict religious upbringing', without any reference to Catholicism. Despite this reference to religion in the scenario, in the choreography of the ballet there are not enough traces to infer any religious background in the family, unlike the multiple Catholic practices that form the daily

routine of Ana's family in the novel. From the action in the ballet, the only moral values that the audience can perceive in relation to the Girl's upbringing are the strictness of the Mother with her daughters (reinforced by the role of Governess) and her repressive values regarding sex (she orders to cover the statues to prevent the young guests in her house to see their nudity).

<sup>8</sup> For instance, see Barnes et al. (1961), Brinson (1960b), Crisp (1961), Money (1967), Seymour (1984) and Clarke (1996).

<sup>9</sup> The structure until this dance number reflects the structure devised in the scenario.

<sup>10</sup> A reference to this scene and the backcloth for it can be found in Barnes et al. (1961: 11).

<sup>11</sup> I have placed the start of Scene Five here because a change in the action and in the set is clear at this moment.

<sup>12</sup> The names of the melodies are mine. They are intended to help the reader to identify the recurrent presence of each melody in the score.

<sup>13</sup> The author of the synopsis remains partly unidentified in the original programme notes, which only provide his initials, A.L.H. Later revivals of the ballet have identified him as Arnold L. Haskell (ROH, 2016: 17).

#### **Notes to Chapter 4: Time**

<sup>1</sup> For some instances, see Parry (2009: 228), Georgiadis E. (2004: 27) and Barnes et al. (1961: 35).

<sup>2</sup> I will offer more details about this aspect in chapter five.

<sup>3</sup> MacMillan removed this explosive entrance in 1966, when he reworked the interlude for a new production in Berlin (Parry, 2009: 318). The number of acrobats was reduced to three and their intervention was condensed. Before their arrival, the servants of the house arrange the space with chairs and tables for the guests to sit and watch. The entertainment then begins. This reworked version of the Carnival interlude has been maintained since then. It can be perceived in the 1983 Birmingham Royal Ballet recording of the ballet as well as in the footage of the 1996 Royal Ballet revival.

<sup>4</sup> All references to locations on stage (right, left, front, back, etc.) are depicted in this dissertation from the audience perspective.

<sup>5</sup> David Herman defines a shot/reverse shot as ‘a sequence of shots in a film that alternates between (a) the viewpoint assumed to correspond to a character’s angle of vision and (b) a viewpoint from which that character’s facial reactions can be seen’ (2007c, 281).

<sup>6</sup> MacMillan had had several opportunities to see the *Prodigal Son* before he choreographed *The Invitation*. It was scheduled in both the 1950 and the 1952 New York City Ballet’s visits to London (Parry, 2009: 94 and Nicholas, 2013: 64). Still a dancer in both occasions, MacMillan probably attended the rehearsals and the performances of the work. MacMillan’s biographer Jann Parry (2009) highlights his early curiosity about American choreographers and dancers. In 1950, he gave up his holiday in order to stay in London and watch NYCB dancers in action, for he wanted to study how dancers trained by Balanchine himself executed his style (2009: 92). He had already seen a number of Balanchine’s ballets performed by other visiting companies in London, such as American Ballet Theatre

and the de Cuevas troupe (2009: 92). In addition, MacMillan had traveled to America several times in the 1950s, trips that gave give more opportunities to see Balanchine's work. As a dancer of the Royal Ballet, he travelled with the company for the 1949 and 1950 American tours (2009: 85 and 95). As a choreographer, he stayed in New York for three months in 1957, creating two ballets for American Ballet Theatre (2009: 185-192). His fascination with *Prodigal Son* is also evident in the all-Balanchine programme that he assembled in 1973 in Covent Garden while he was Artistic Director of the Royal Ballet. He then incorporated *The Four Temperaments*, *Prodigal Son* and *Agon* to the repertory of the company (Anderson, 2007: 1989).

### **Notes to Chapter 5: Space**

<sup>1</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan (2012) distinguishes at least four forms of textual spatiality: narrative space, the spatial extension of the text ('discourse' space in this thesis), the space that serves as context and container for the text, and the spatial form of the text.

<sup>2</sup> The application of the theory of the metaphor to dance is a contentious issue. Julie Van Camp (1996) considers that metaphors are linguistic devices unsuitable to explain the expressivity of non-verbal media such as dance.

<sup>3</sup> The ballet opens with the Boy idly lying on the floor, daydreaming, while the Mother reads some letters. The scene is very brief, since he suddenly wakes up and leaves the stage. The Mother and the Two Sisters enter then onstage and dance the *pas de trois* mentioned here.

<sup>4</sup> The glances and gestures of the rest of the characters, expressing their reactions to the Girl's display, are here very secondary and directly linked to the main action.

<sup>5</sup> A zoom-in picks out and isolates a person or object from a wider context (Hayward, 2006: 510). In a long shot, the characters are at some distance from the camera; they are seen in full in their surrounding environment (Hayward, 2006: 356). And a medium shot frames a character from waist, hips or knees up (or down). It still allows the character to be seen in relation to her or his surroundings (Hayward, 2006: 356).

<sup>6</sup> This scene within No. 16 is described in the scenario and the manuscript score as ‘the 4 confronted’. It parallels a similar identification of the quartet in No. 4, when they meet for the first time. The second confrontation thus closes the narrative circle of their trajectory in the story, which the first version of the scenario stressed particularly with the inclusion of a *pas de quatre*. The last revivals by the Royal Ballet, in 1996 and 2016, have not preserved the second meeting, since they omit the presence of the Boy in the scene.

<sup>7</sup> The 1996 and 2016 stagings by the Royal Ballet have considerably reduced the length of this walk.

## **Notes to Chapter 6: The Four Relationships**

<sup>1</sup> In narrative theory, *emplotment* is ‘the process by which situations and events are linked together to produce a plot’ (Herman, 2007c: 277).

<sup>2</sup> In the quotations from *Le blé en herbe* in this chapter, the translation is mine.

<sup>3</sup> The heavy melody is played by the horns, which are melodramatically accompanied by the strings. The rhythmic pattern of the sequence is emphatically steady, with a brief, quick acceleration before reaching a rest. The pitch contour of the melody suggests seriousness by insistently maintaining the same level even after the small leap which briefly alters it and which is resolved by a set of three

descending notes returning to the original pitch level (See Musical Example 6 in Appendix 2).

<sup>4</sup> *Jardin aux Lilas* was premiered in London by Ballet Rambert in 1936 and Ballet Theatre (later American Ballet Theatre) danced it at the Royal Opera House in 1946 (ROH online collections), when MacMillan was already a member of the junior company of the Sadler's Wells Ballet (Parry, 2009: 62). For six weeks in July and August 1946, the junior company was on tour but was back in London in late August to perform in the open-air theatre in Finsbury Park. The days it rained, dancers were allowed to abandon the performance and leave to see something else, usually another ballet company. Thus they were able to catch the Ballet Theatre season (2009: 68-70). *Jardin* was premiered on 30 July (ROH online collections) and, according to the playbills, was also on programme on 3 August (matinée and evening), 12, 14 (matinée and evening), 16, 20, 22 and 24 August (matinée and evening). It is therefore plausible that MacMillan watched the ballet then. In addition, MacMillan's frequent travels to America in the 1950s, commented earlier here (see note six in chapter four), provided him with additional opportunities to become familiar with the ballet.

<sup>5</sup> In this case, metonymy plays a rhetorical role.

<sup>6</sup> Notice again the metonymy.

<sup>7</sup> The set of glances between Boy and Wife (and between Husband and Girl) during the dance lesson and the events that lead to the waltz are not mentioned in the Benesh score but have passed down from production to production. All the revivals viewed for this study keep them. Those on the first staging were perceived



by some reviewers (i.e., see Barnes et al., 1961: 11) and were captured by some photographers (Money, 1967: 201).

<sup>8</sup> As I commented when I introduced this term in chapter two, the notion *narrative gap* refers to the inevitable omissions in fictional stories, that is, to the events that are not included in the plot (Abbott, 2007: 44). For further details on this notion, see p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the lifts had an undertone of sex in No. 5 (when the Boy carefully helped the Girl to reach a higher level, suggesting her first tentative steps towards sexual discovery), in No. 6 (when a rough, waist level lift between Husband and Wife portrayed their unsatisfactory sexual rapport) and in No. 10 (when the Husband lifted the Girl during their waltz together, to the scandal of the rest of the characters).

<sup>10</sup> By 'stylised' I mean that it is an artistic representation of the sexual act that, even if explicit, is not a mere mimicking of the real life movements.

<sup>11</sup> Using the same metaphor, the scenario of the ballet describes the Wife's leading role in the seduction of the Boy as 'show you how to dance' (MacMillan et al., 1960).

<sup>12</sup> The two *pas de deux* of the couple take 9.40 minutes, in comparison to the 5.50 min. of the Boy & Girl's duets, 3.30 min. of Wife & Husband's, and 5.05 of Wife & Boy's.

<sup>13</sup> The ball has a marginal role in the novel, since Ana is there a mere observer from the balustrade and never gets to participate in the dancing.

<sup>14</sup> In films, there are basically seven types of shots in terms of camera distance with respect to the object within the shot: extreme close-up, close-up, medium close-up, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot and extreme long shot (Hayward, 2006: 355). Here I use the terms close-up, medium shot and long shot in the following sense:

- Close-up: Shot that isolates a portion of a character, usually the face (Villarejo, 2007: 38). The subject framed by the camera fills the screen (Hayward, 2006: 355).
- Medium shot: Shot that frames a character from waist, hips or knees up (or down). It allows the character to be seen in relation to her or his surroundings (Hayward, 2006: 356).
- Long shot: Shot where the characters are at some distance from the camera; they are seen in full in their surrounding environment (Hayward, 2006: 356).

Shots have a subjective or objective value: the closer the shot, the more subjective its value, the more meaning is inscribed from within the shot; conversely, the longer the distance of the shot, the more objective its value, the greater the participation of the spectator in the inscription of meaning (Hayward, 2006: 356).

<sup>15</sup> This scene in No. 9 was analysed in chapter five, for it exemplifies the spatial strategy that exploits the three dimensionality of the stage to present multiple actions simultaneously. For further details, see p. 143.

<sup>16</sup> I use the term 'intrusively' in an analogy between these cues in the music and the intrusive narrator that comments on the action in a novel.

## Notes to Chapter 7: Characters

<sup>1</sup> I based by arguments on the mutual interdependence of plot and characters on Manfred Pfister (1988). For further details see p. 36, in chapter two.

<sup>2</sup> Pfister prefers the term 'figure' to that of 'character' because it exposes the deliberate artificiality of the construct (Pfister, 1988: 160). Here I will use both terms as synonyms.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the role of the author in the crafting of a character, a cognitive-psychological approach also emphasises the role of the intellectual activity of the reader in constructing a mental model of each character. For a brief summary of this perspective see Margolin, 2007: 76-79.

<sup>4</sup> As commented earlier in chapter four, the group of Entertainers was later suppressed by MacMillan, who reduced the number of acrobats to just the three leading ones (Hen and Cockerels).

<sup>5</sup> Term borrowed from Pfister (1988: 164).

<sup>6</sup> Manfred Pfister borrows from B. Beckermann the three-dimensional conception of figures that assigns them breadth, length and depth. Breadth is the range of possibilities inherent in the dramatic figure at the beginning of the story; length refers to the development it actually goes through as a result of a process of change; and depth is the relationship between its external behaviour and its inner life (1988: 176).

<sup>7</sup> I borrow from Pfister again to distinguish between the terms conception and characterization. The former is 'the anthropological model that the dramatic figure is based on and the conventions involved in turning this anthropological model

into fiction'. He includes here the above mentioned three-dimensional model (breadth, length, depth) and a set of character's types such as, static vs dynamic, flat vs round, open vs closed. Characterization comprises 'the formal techniques of information transmission that are used to present the dramatic figure', including verbal/non-verbal and implicit/explicit (1988: 176).

<sup>8</sup> The tradition of portraying the psychological interiority of characters was established, in British ballet, between the 1920s and 1940s, within the group of choreographers associated with Ballet Rambert, Antony Tudor, Frederick Ashton and Andrée Howard among them (Jones, 2013: 250-252). MacMillan belongs to the following generation at the Royal Ballet, who inherited and developed an already consolidated practice.

<sup>9</sup> Although the exact shape and timing of these movements varies from ballerina to ballerina, they all belong to a similar range of forms and expressivity.

<sup>10</sup> It seems that MacMillan was particularly pleased with this dramatic finding because the 'silent scream' features in all the recordings and materials from stagings of the ballet done in his lifetime. It was lost in the 1996 and, partially, in the 2016 Royal Ballet productions, where only the Yasmine Naghdi, in the second cast, incorporated it late in the rehearsal process, after some research material from this thesis was made available to Gary Harris, responsible for the production.

### **Notes to Chapter 8: In Context**

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> For further details, see Nicholas, 2013: 64.

<sup>3</sup> Earlier that year, MacMillan created another duet that might have also been inspired by *The Cage*. The *pas de deux* between the Fairy and the Young Man in *Le Baiser de la fée* (1960), choreographed on Svetlana Beriosova and Donald MacLeary, contains an intimate moment where an insect-like movement of the ballerina in the arms of the male dancer, on the floor, recalls a praying mantis (MacLeary in Wake 2003).

<sup>4</sup> According to the playbills preserved at the Theatre and Performance Archive at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *Pillar of Fire*, with Nora Kaye in the main role, was, like *Jardin aux lilas*, scheduled in the 1946 Ballet Theatre season at the Royal Opera House. In August, the dates were 14 (matinée and evening), 16, 20, 22 and 24 (matinée and evening). For further details about this season and MacMillan's contact with it, see note four for chapter six, in page 323.

<sup>5</sup> Although the relationship between the two choreographers became complex over the years, in 1960 MacMillan singled out Ashton as his most decisive inspiration. 'I learned my craft, how to put a ballet on the stage, from Ashton... The only way you can learn is by watching other people' (quoted in Brinson, 1960a: 9). The list of his influences includes 'Ashton, Balanchine, Petit, Cranko, Massine, de Valois, Howard, Celia Franca, Tony Burke..., Robbins and Tudor' (in Brinson, 1960a: 9). Ashton, on his part, had allowed MacMillan to observe his rehearsals, for he believed that the only way to learn the craft of choreographing was to 'serve an apprenticeship to a master' so that after absorbing his/her lessons, the disciple is able to revolt against them and find his own voice (Ashton, 1958: 38), as he himself had done with Bronislava Nijinska (Kavanagh, 1996: 93).

<sup>6</sup> The exploration of areas of experience previously absent from drama stages was not only a merit of Osborne's plays but a defining principle of both the English Stage Company (ESC) and Theatre Workshop (TW). One of George Devine and Tony Richardson's founding purposes for ESC was to reposition London theatre away from West End's disengagement with important contemporary issues and to agitate and concern the theatre-goers (Shellard, 1999: 49). Littlewood's reorientation of TW, away from its original political purpose (though retaining the social awareness) towards a theatre facing up the problems of the time, shares a similar drive (Shellard, 1999: 61).

<sup>7</sup> The ESC received £2,500 as start-up money and £7,000 for its first year. During the 1956-57 season, it was the fifth largest recipient of money from the drama panel at the Arts Council (Rebellato, 1999: 67). For more details about the founding history of the company see Rebellato (1999) or Shellard (1999).

<sup>8</sup> In 1963, the disproportion reached its peak, with £3,000 awarded to TW and £20,000 to ESC (Shellard, 1999: 63).

<sup>9</sup> De Valois' position in the Royal Ballet was also complex. She was Director of the ballet company but had limited powers to defend her projects, for she was excluded from the decision making process. Helena Hammond (2013) has argued that she represented the female, subaltern 'other' in relation to the opera company, favoured by the all-male Board of Directors of the Royal Opera House. In Brechtian terms, that exclusion enabled a privileged position of estrangement for her and the company.

<sup>10</sup> As mentioned earlier, MacMillan spent most of his career in the Royal Ballet. The only period when he was not linked to the company was during his time as Artistic Director of the Deutsche Oper in West Berlin, from 1966 to 1970.

<sup>11</sup> MacMillan's admiration for those two ballets is evident in his decision to bring them back to the repertory of the Royal Ballet while he was Artistic Director of the company. *Jardin* came back in 1970 and *A Wedding Bouquet* in 1974 (Bland, 1981: 301 and 306).

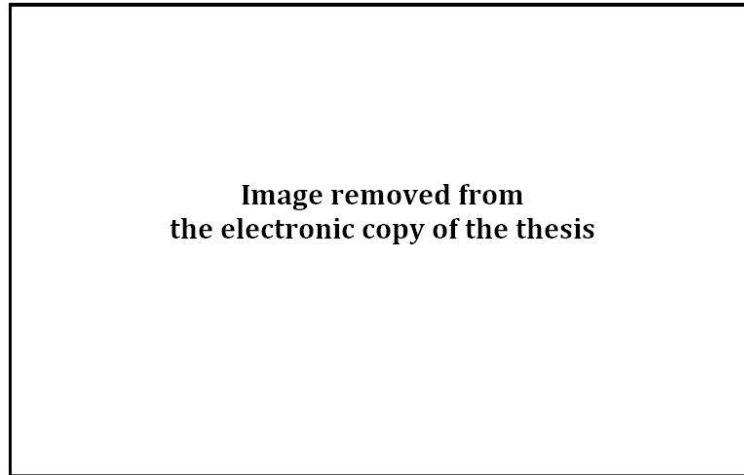
<sup>12</sup> Coincidentally, *Les Noces* has nowadays an important place in the repertory of the Royal Ballet. Bronislava Nijinska herself revived the ballet for the company in 1966 at Ashton's invitation (Bland, 1981: 153) and it has been regularly performed ever since.

<sup>13</sup> The relevance of the Husband/Wife relationship in the plot of the ballet should not be underestimated. Mary Clarke, reviewing the 1996 revival for *Dancing Times*, noticed how the stronger performances of the dancers in the adult roles (Irek Mukhamedov and Genesia Rosato) made this secondary plot line overshadow the main one, transforming the whole story into the 'tragedy of a broken marriage' (577).

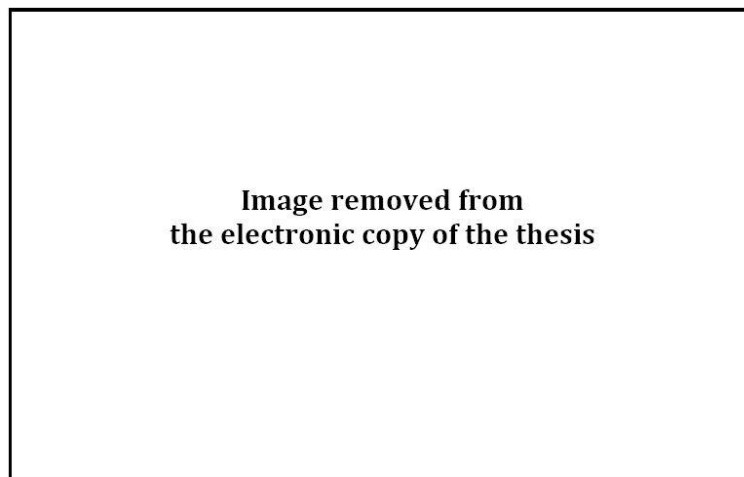
<sup>14</sup> He would also direct it years later, in 1982, together with another Ionesco's play, *The Chairs* (1952) (Parry, 2009: 561).

<sup>15</sup> *Spectre* was in the repertory of the Royal Ballet since 1932 (Bland, 1981: 285).

## APPENDIX 1: PICTURES

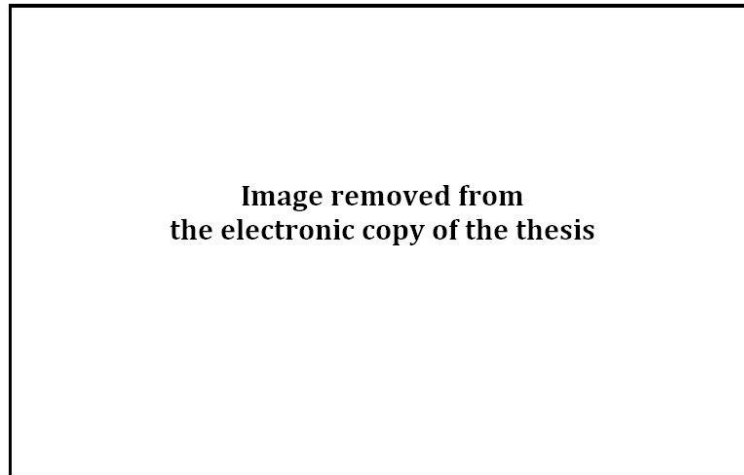


**Picture 1:** Nicholas Georgiadis' costume design for Women  
In: V&A Collections online

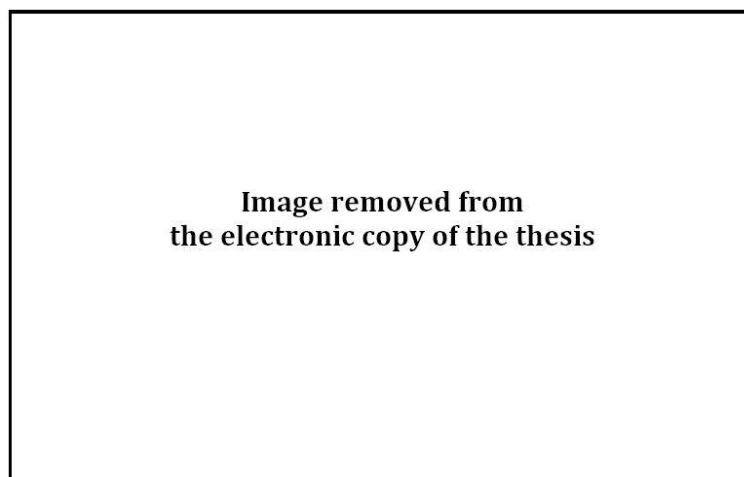


**Picture 2:** Tangle lines in Georgiadis' backcloth for the garden.  
Lynn Seymour (the Girl), Christopher Gable (the Boy), and dancers from the Royal Ballet  
Photo Credit: Houston Rogers. In: *Dance and Dancers*, Feb 1961: 7





**Picture 3:** Backcloth for a Dark Place in the Garden. Design by Nicholas Georgiadis  
Photo Credit: Donald Southern. In: *Dance and Dancers*, Feb 1961: 11



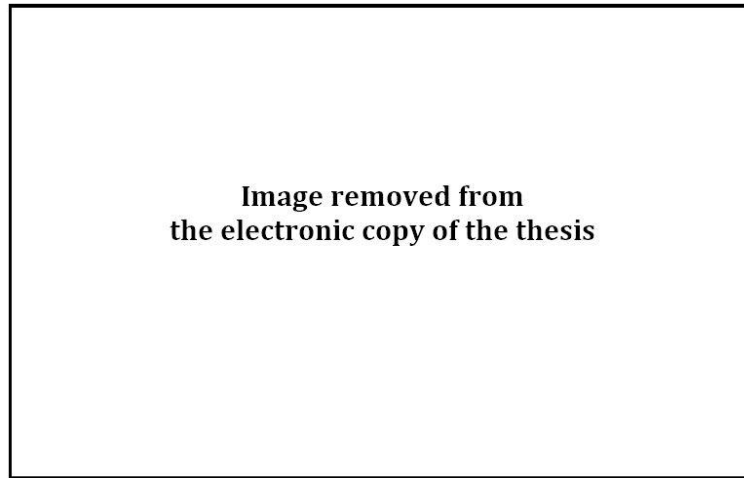
**Picture 4:** Husband (Desmond Doyle) and Wife (Anne Heaton)  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dancing Times*, 1961: 225

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the electronic copy of the thesis

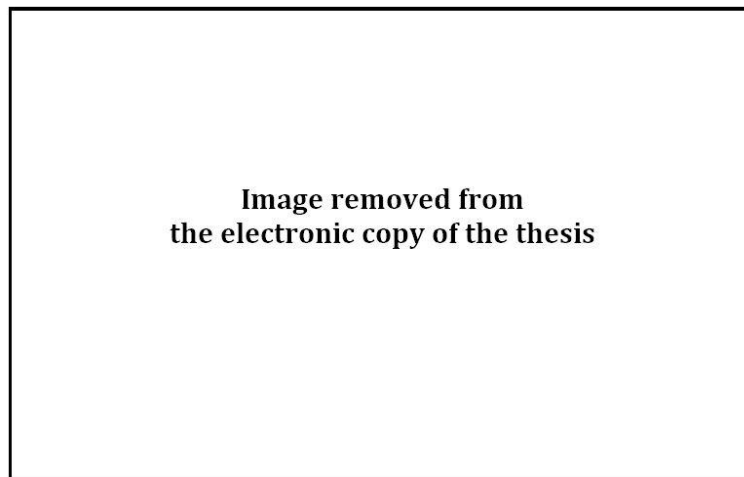
**Picture 5:** Girl's Knotted Position  
Husband (Demond Doyle) and Girl (Lynn Seymour)  
Photo Credit: Anthony Crickmay. In: Crickmay, 1980: 73

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the electronic copy of the thesis

**Picture 6:** Girl (Lynn Seymour) kneeling at Husband (Desmond Doyle)  
Photo Credit: Houston Rogers. In: *Dance and Dancers*, Feb 1961: 8



**Picture 7:** Mother (Shirley Bishop) with Sisters (Brenda Taylor and Barbara Remington)  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dance and Dancers*, Feb 1961: 6



**Picture 8:** Children in the Garden. Expansive Movements  
Lynn Seymour (the Girl), Christopher Gable (the Boy) and dancers of the Royal Ballet  
Photo Credit: Houston Rogers. In: *Theatre World*, February 1961: 28

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**Picture 9:** *La gallina ciega* (1788), Francisco de Goya  
In: Museo del Prado online

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**Picture 10:** A Room in the House. Design: Nicholas Georgiadis  
Desmond Doyle (the Husband) and Anne Heaton (the Wife)  
In: Georgiadis E., 2004: 80



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**Picture 11:** Backcloth Design for 'Outside the House'  
Design: Nicholas Georgiadis  
In: Georgiadis E., 2004: 26



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**Picture 12:** Falling Movement in No. 2  
The Girl (Lynn Seymour) and the Boy (Christopher Gable)  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dancing Times*, 1961: 289

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**Picture 13:** Boy's Gesture towards Girl's Heart  
Lynn Seymour (the Girl) and Wayne Eagling (the Boy)  
Photo Credit: Leslie E. Spatt. In: kennethmacmillan.com

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**Picture 14:** Boy and Girl Dancing 'Side by Side'  
Christopher Gable and Lynn Seymour  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 198

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**Picture 15:** Boy and Girl 'Side by Side'  
Wayne Eagling (the Boy) and Lynn Seymour (the Girl)  
Photo credit: Anthony Crickmay. In: Crickmay, 1980: 71

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**Picture 16:** Boy Kneeling Down and Embracing Girl's Knees  
Lynn Seymour and Christopher Gable  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 198

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**Picture 17:** Embrace and Head Rest in No. 5  
Lynn Seymour and Christopher Gable  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 200

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**Picture 18:** Shoulder Lift in No. 5 – 'Moment of the Cliff'  
Lynn Seymour and Christopher Gable  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 200



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**Picture 19:** Boy and Girl's Last Kiss  
Lynn Seymour and Christopher Gable  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 208

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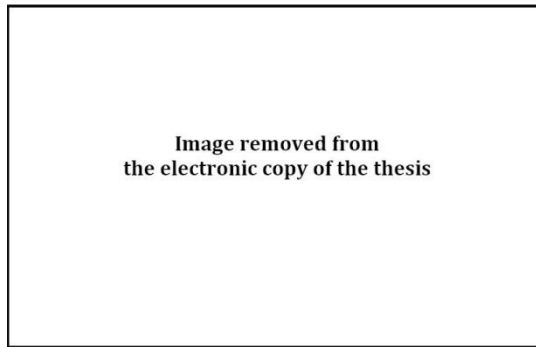
**Picture 20:** Girl's Gesture of Aversion  
Lynn Seymour and Christopher Gable  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 208

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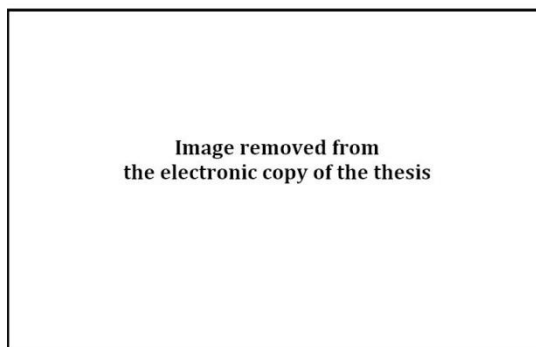
**Picture 21:** Husband and Wife: Cold Support  
Desmond Kelly and Anya Linden  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 200

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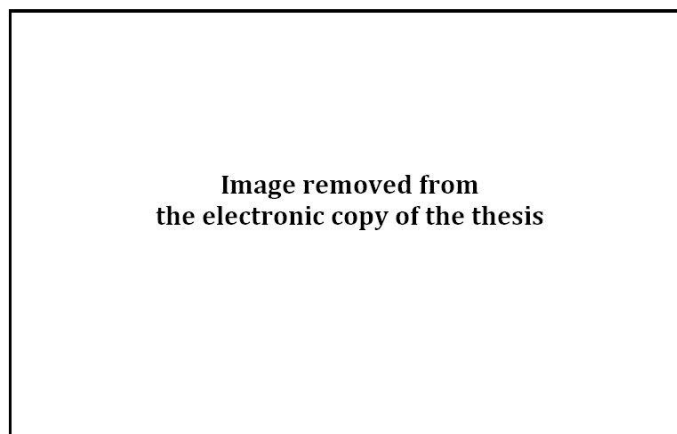
**Picture 22:** Husband and Wife's Formal Pose  
Costume design by Nicholas Georgiadis  
In: V&A Online Collection



**Picture 23:** *La maja vestida* (1800-1807), Francisco de Goya  
In: Museo del Prado [online]



**Picture 24:** *La maja desnuda* (1795-1800), Francisco de Goya  
In: Museo del Prado [online]



**Picture 25:** Wife's *Maja*-like Horizontal Pose  
Vergie Derman (the Wife) and Desmond Doyle (the Husband)  
Photo Credit: Leslie E. Spatt. In: kennethmacmillan.com

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**Picture 26:** Husband and Wife: Rough Rapport, Waist-level lift  
Desmond Doyle and Anya Linden  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 200

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**Picture 27:** Boy (Chirstopher Gable) and Wife (Anya Linden) meet  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In Money, 1967: no page

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**Picture 28:** 'Head to Heart' Gesture  
Boy (Christopher Gable) and Wife (Anne Heaton)  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dancing Times*, 1961:288

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**Picture 29:** Boy and Wife: Second Lift  
Christopher Gable and Anne Heaton  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dancing Times*, 1961: 225

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**Picture 30:** Boy and Wife. Metonymical Use of Leg  
Christopher Gable and Anya Linden  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 202

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**Picture 31:** Boy and Wife. Symbolic Use of Leg  
Christopher Gable and Anya Linden  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 202

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**Picture 32:** Wife's Commanding Position  
Wife (Anya Linden) and Boy (Christopher Gable)  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 202

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**Picture 33:** Boy and Wife, About to Part  
Christopher Gable and Anya Linden  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 202

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**Picture 34:** Boy and Wife – Farewell Kiss  
Christopher Gable and Anya Linden  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: *Money*, 1967: 202

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**Picture 35:** Girl and Husband – She is Elated  
Lynn Seymour and Desmond Doyle  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dance and Dancers*, 1961: 9



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**Picture 36:** Girl and Husband – Falling *arabesque*  
Leanne Benjamin and Irek Mukhamedov  
Photo Credit: Angela Taylor. In: *Dancing Times*, 1996: 576

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**Picture 37:** Husband and Girl – Down to the Ground  
Desmond Doyle and Lynn Seymour  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dance and Dancers*, 1961: 13

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**Picture 38:** Husband and Girl – Violence  
Desmond Doyle and Lynn Seymour  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dance and Dancers*, 1961: 12

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**Picture 39:** Husband and Girl – Violence  
Desmond Doyle and Lynn Seymour  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: *Money*, 1967: 204

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**Picture 40:** Husband and Wife – Waist-level Lift  
Desmond Doyle and Lynn Seymour  
Photo Credit: Houston Rogers. In: *Dance and Dancers*, 1961: 12

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**Picture 41:** Husband and Girl Meet  
Lynn Seymour, Christopher Gable and Desmond Doyle  
Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dance and Dancers*, 1961:8

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**Picture 42:** Husband and Girl – About to Waltz  
Desmond Kelly (the Husband), Marion Tait (the Girl),  
Susie Crow (the Governess) and Roland Price (the Boy)  
Children in view: Nicholas Millington, Denis Bonner, Susan Lucas and James Smith  
Photo Credit: Leslie E. Spatt. In: *www.kennethmacmillan.com*

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**Picture 43:** Girl's Silent Scream  
Lynn Seymour  
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: *Money*, 1967: 206

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**Picture 44:** Girl's Silent Scream

Lynn Seymour

Photo Credit: Dominic. In: *Dance and Dancers*, 1961: 13

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the electronic copy of the thesis

**Picture 45:** Girl's Protective Arms

Lynn Seymour

Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: *Money*, 1967: 207

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**Picture 46:** Wife's Angst

Anne Heaton

Photo credit: Anthony Crickmay. In: V&A Online Collections

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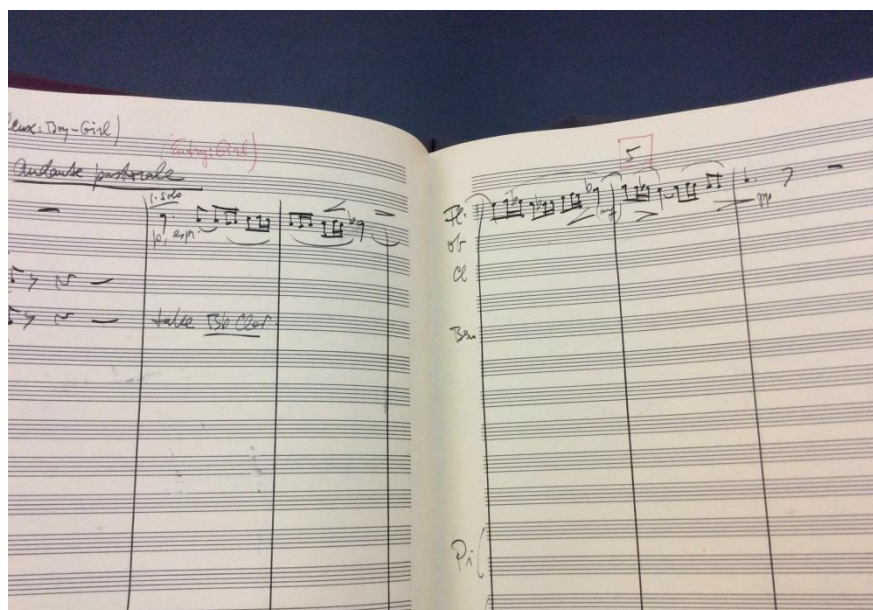
**Picture 47:** Wife Shoved to the Ground by Husband in No. 10

Anya Linden and Desmond Doyle

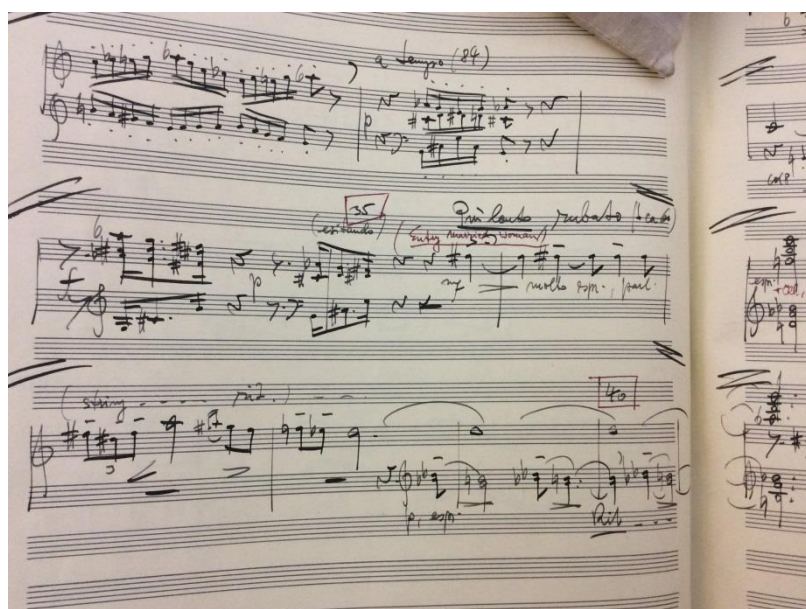
Photo Credit: Keith Money. In: Money, 1967: 200



## APPENDIX 2: MUSICAL EXAMPLES

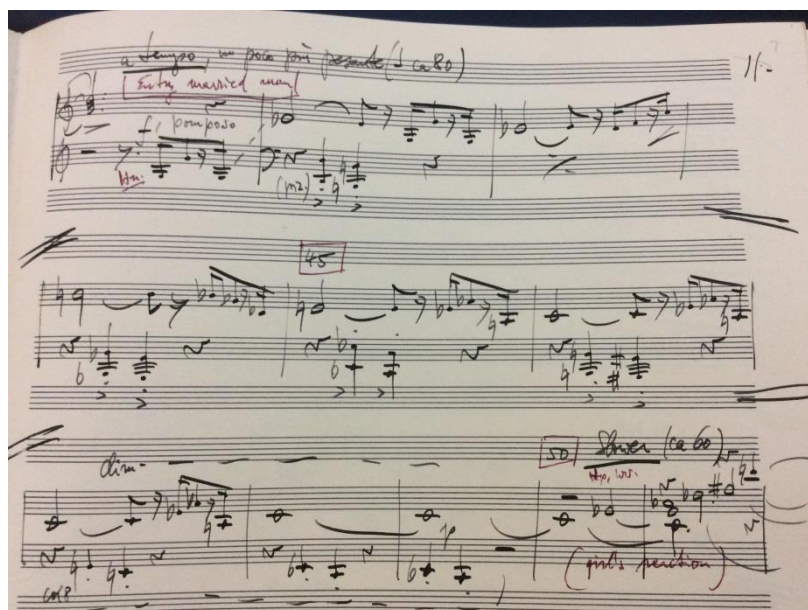


**Musical Example 1:** 'Youthful' Melody. Bars 2 to 6. Flute  
Facsimile of Full Orchestra Score. Composer: Mátyás Seiber  
Photo Credit: Cristina de Lucas. With kind permission of Mátyás Seiber Trust



**Musical Example 2:** 'Sorrowful' Melody. Bars 35 to 39  
Facsimile of Piano Reduction Score. Composer: Mátyás Seiber  
Photo Credit: Cristina de Lucas. With kind permission of Mátyás Seiber Trust

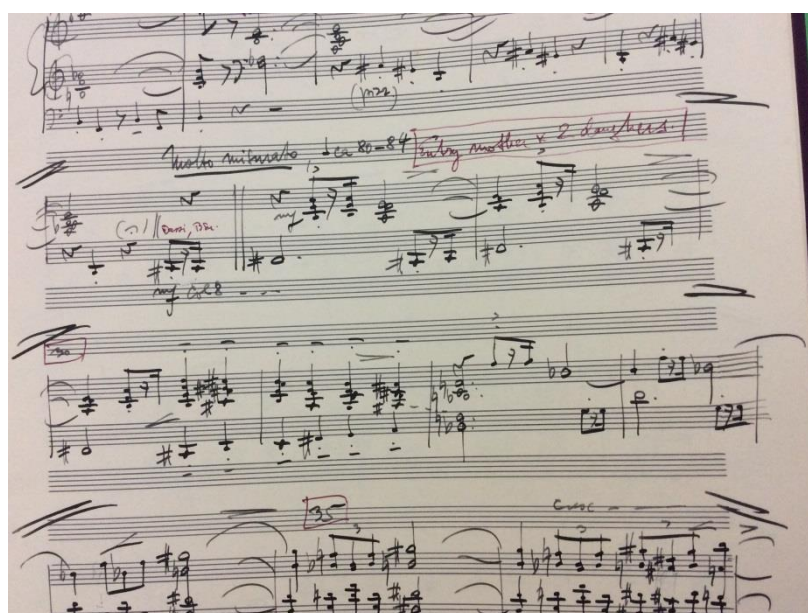




**Musical Example 3: 'Sinister' Melody. Bars 41 to 49**

Facsimile of Piano Reduction Score. Composer: Mátyás Seiber

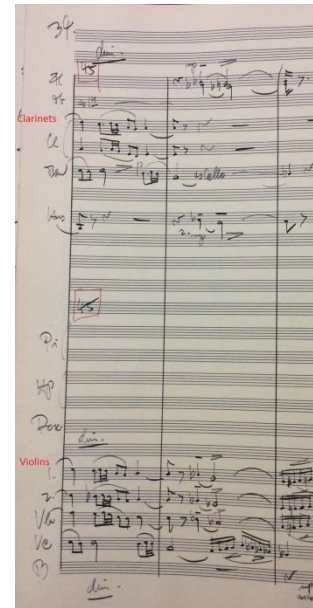
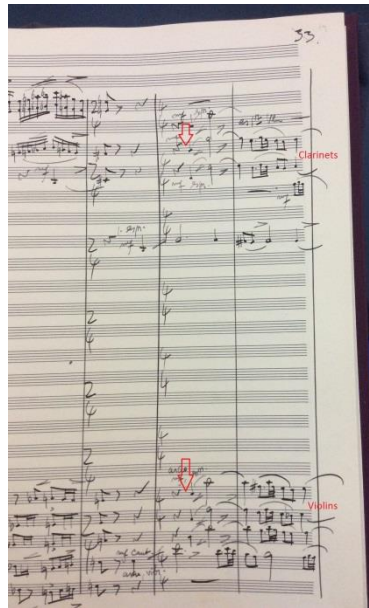
Photo Credit: Cristina de Lucas. With kind permission of Mátyás Seiber Trust



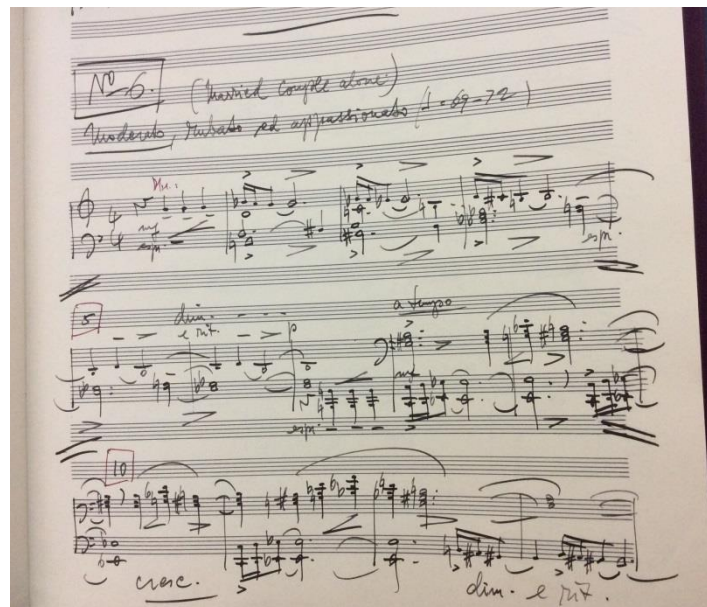
**Musical Example 4: 'Strict Upbringing' Melody. Bars 28 to 32**

Facsimile of Piano Reduction Score. Composer: Mátyás Seiber

Photo Credit: Cristina de Lucas. With kind permission of Mátyás Seiber Trust



**Musical Example 5:** 'Romantic' Melody. Bars 43 to 46. Clarinets and Violins  
Facsimile of Full Orchestra Score. Composer: Mátyás Seiber  
Photo Credit: Cristina de Lucas. With kind permission of Mátyás Seiber Trust



**Musical Example 6:** 'Unhappy' Melody. Bars 1 to 5  
Facsimile of Piano Reduction Score. Composer: Mátyás Seiber  
Photo Credit: Cristina de Lucas. With kind permission of Mátyás Seiber Trust



### **APPENDIX 3: ETHIC APPROVAL**

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference DAN 13/012 in the Department of Dance and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on August 2013. A sample of the two Consent Forms is included in the following pages.



**ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Research Project:** Four Early Narrative Ballets by Kenneth MacMillan  
(Working Title)

**Brief Description of Research Project:**

The project researches the early career of the British choreographer Kenneth MacMillan. It focuses on four one-act narrative ballets, House of Birds (1955), The Burrow (1958), The Invitation (1960) and Las Hermanas (1963). It intends to provide a solid contextualization of MacMillan's early productions, a sound study of his artistic skills in developing narrative stories, and an in-depth analysis of these four ballets. The methodology is chiefly theoretical, involving analysis of print and audio-visual sources. Additionally, it might involve observing rehearsals of the ballets and interviews with the artists who collaborated with MacMillan in the creation of these ballets. Interviews will be audio recorded and will have an estimated duration of two hours.

**Investigator Contact Details:**

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Tel. 07552206054

**Consent Statement:**

I agree to be interviewed for the purpose of this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw my consent at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity and statements will be adequately cited in the publication of any findings.

I consent to the audio-recording of the interview, for research and educational purposes. The University or the researcher will process my personal data in the making of the recording available for use for educational and research purposes in appropriate file formats.

I understand that:

- editing may be required by the University or by agents authorised by the University for quality or technical purposes;

- edited subsections may be used in other University materials for purposes stated above;



- the recording(s) will be stored securely in appropriate file formats on servers belonging to the University and/or its authorised agents.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

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The University of Roehampton is committed to processing information in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998. The personal data collected on this form will be held securely, kept according to JISC record retention guidelines and will only be used for administrative purposes.

**ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Research Project:** Four Early Narrative Ballets by Kenneth MacMillan  
(Working Title)

**Brief Description of Research Project:**

The project researches the early career of the British choreographer Kenneth MacMillan. It focuses on four one-act narrative ballets, House of Birds (1955), The Burrow (1958), The Invitation (1960) and Las Hermanas (1963). It intends to provide a solid contextualization of MacMillan's early productions, a sound study of his artistic skills in developing narrative stories, and an in-depth analysis of these four ballets. The methodology is chiefly theoretical, involving analysis of print and audio-visual sources. Additionally, it might involve observing rehearsals of the ballets and interviews with the artists who collaborated with MacMillan in the creation of these ballets. Interviews will be audio recorded.

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**Consent Statement:**

I agree to the presence of the above mentioned researcher in the studio while rehearsals are taking place. I am aware that I am free to withdraw this consent at any point.

I understand that the information gathered from observation will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected or disclosed in the publication of any findings, according to the option selected below (please, tick the appropriate box):

- ☐ I agree that my identity is disclosed in the publication of any findings.
- ☐ I prefer that my identity is not disclosed in the publication of any findings.



Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

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